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THE
IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE
OF THE
HOLY TRINITY
ASSERTED,
IN REPLY TO SOME LATE PAMPHLETS.

BY DANIEL WATERLAND, D. D.
LATE CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY, AND
MASTER OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

In Necessariis, Unitas:
In Non necessariis, Libertas:
In omnibus, Prudentia et Charitas.

*He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed
in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John iii. 18.*

THIRD EDITION CORRECTED.

Cambridge,

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE has appeared, very lately, a small pamphlet^a, of 76 pages, intituled, A sober and charitable disquisition concerning the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity; endeavouring to shew, that those in the different schemes should bear with each other in their different sentiments, and should not separate communions. The treatise appears to be written in a good manner, and with a christian spirit; on which account it deserves the more notice: and the question debated in it, is undoubtedly important in every view, whether with regard to peace in this life, or happiness in the next. And as I have formerly spent some time and pains

^a Printed for John Gray, at the Cross Keys in the Poultry near Cheapside, 1732.

N. B. There were several other pieces which preceded, or soon followed it, relating to the same cause.

1. Mr. Nation's Sermon, preached Sept. 8, 1731.
2. A letter to Mr. Nation. By P. C. 1732.
3. A vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon: with a letter from Mr. Nation.
4. A letter to the author of the Vindication: with a second letter to Mr. Nation. By P. C.
5. A reply to Mr. P. C.'s letter.
6. A postscript, or a third letter to Mr. Nation. By P. C.

pains in discussing the truth of that high and holy doctrine, from scripture, reason, and antiquity, so now I think it concerns me the more to debate, in like manner, the importance of it: which I shall, by God's assistance, endeavour to do, fully and fairly, with all due care and attention, and with all becoming reverence for the subject, as well as respect towards the reader.

Before I enter upon the main debate, it will be proper to clear the way, by some preliminary observations concerning the several sorts of persons who deny the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, and their views in doing it; as also concerning the advocates, on the other side, who assert the importance of that sacred doctrine, and the general principles on which they proceed.

I. As to the persons who deny the importance of the doctrine, they are reducible to three kinds; being either such as disbelieve the doctrine itself; or such as are in some suspense about it; or, lastly, such as really assent to it, as true doctrine. It is with this last sort only, that our present debate is properly concerned. But yet for the clearer apprehending those three different kinds of men, and their different views in joining together so far, in the same cause, it will not be improper to say something severally and distinctly of each.

1. Those that disbelieve the doctrine itself, while they join with others in decrying the importance

importance of it, are to be looked upon as a kind of artful men, who think it policy to carry on a scheme gently and leisurely, and to steal upon the unwary, by soft and almost insensible degrees. A method which is indeed commonly slower in producing the effect, but is the surer for being so; as it is less shocking, and more insinuating. They are content therefore, at first, to make men cool and indifferent towards the doctrine; as thinking it a good point gained, and a promising advance made towards the laying it aside. With these views, both socinians and arians, who disbelieve the doctrine itself, may yet be content, for a time, to declare only against the importance of it. Deists also may join in the same thing, conceiving, that indifference, as to a prime article of christianity, may in time draw on the same kind of indifference towards christianity itself. They are disbelievers with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, and with respect also to all revealed religion: and they will of course favour and incourage the denial of any part, in order to bring on the subversion of the whole. However, our present concern is not directly with deists, nor with such as deny the doctrine of the Trinity: for our dispute now is, not about the certainty of revealed religion (which is supposed in our present question) nor about the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, (which is also supposed;) but about the importance, use, or value of it.

2. A second sort of persons, before mentioned, are such as seriously believe christianity in the general, and do not disbelieve the doctrine of the Trinity in particular, but suspend their belief of it, and are a kind of sceptics on that head. These men deny the importance of the doctrine, because they think it doubtful, whether it be a doctrine of holy scripture or no: and they judge very rightly in the general, that a stress ought not to be laid upon uncertainties, upon things precarious and conjectural, which cannot be proved to the satisfaction of the common reason of mankind. They are right in these, and wrong in hypothesis, as shall be shewn in the sequel. Only I may hint, by the way, that our present debate is not directly with this kind of men: for they are rather to be referred to what has been written for the truth of the doctrine, than to what more immediately concerns the importance of it. Yet because the presumed uncertainty, or doubtfulness of the doctrine, is by these men made the principal objection against the importance of it, and the author of the *Sober and charitable Disquisition* seems to lay the main stress of the cause there, quite through his performance; it will be necessary to give that objection a place in this discourse, and to return an answer to it in the general, or so far as may be proper; not to draw the whole controversy about the truth of the doctrine, into this other question concerning the importance of it.

While

While I am speaking of men doubtful in this article, I would be understood of serious and religious men, and not of such persons whose minds are purely secular, and who are indifferent to every thing but what concerns this world: such persons are of no consideration in our present question; neither are they men proper to be reasoned with, as they have no relish at all for inquiries of this nature. But I proceed.

3. A third kind of men are those that believe the truth of the doctrine, but demur to the importance of it. And as Episcopius was, in a manner, their father or founder, and great leader, they have been frequently called after him, Episcopians. These are properly the persons whom we have here to dispute with: for they are the men who make the truth, and the importance of the doctrine two distinct questions, admitting the one, and rejecting the other, or however demurring to it. The design of this middle way was to reconcile parties, if possible, and to favour the Socinians so far, as to condemn their doctrines only, without condemning the men. But this new and fruitless expedient was very much disliked by all that had any warm and hearty concern for the true and ancient faith. Such coldness and indifferency, with regard to a prime article of christianity, appeared to many, to be nothing else but an artful specious way of betraying it, and likely to do more mischief than an open denial. The

ablest and foundest divines, as well lutheran^a as reformed^b, have reclaimed strongly against it, detesting the neutrality of the remonstrant brethren, as tending to undermine the gospel of Christ. The divines of our church, however otherwise supposed to be against calvinism, and to favour arminianism, yet smartly condemned the remonstrants in that article. Dr. Bull, particularly, appeared against them in a very accurate and learned treatise^c, in the year 1694. And it is worth observing, how Dr. Nicholls afterwards expresses himself, in the name of our whole body. "There is another arminian doctrine, which we avoid as deadly poison, their assertion that there is no necessity
" of

^a For the lutherans, I shall cite Buddeus only, who is as mild and moderate in his censure of Episcopius, as any of them.

Nimio enim concordiae, dissentientesque tolerandi studio, ea interdum ad fidem et salutem minime necessaria judicavit, quae vetus ecclesia ipsa, scripturae suffragio hac in re non destituta, adeo necessaria pronunciavit, ut aeternae salutis spem non habeat qui ea negare aut impugnare ausus fuerit. Buddei Isag. p. 422.

^b The learned Witsius may speak for the reformed.

Injuria in Deum remonstrantes sunt, quando palpum obtrufuri, quos plus justo amant, socinianis, eos describunt quasi qui vitam suam ex evangelii praescripto sic instituunt, ut Patrem in Filio ejus colant, et ab utroque Spiritus Sancti gratiam sanctis piisque precibus ambire studeant. Quid audiemus tandem? Illine vitam ex evangelii praescripto instituunt, qui satisfactionem Christi negantes, evangelium evertunt? Illine Patrem in Filio colunt, qui aeternum Dei Filium *ψαλδν ἀνθρώπων* esse calumniantur, quem uti talem adorantes convertunt in idolum? Illine piis precibus Spiritus Sancti gratiam ab utroque ambiunt, qui Spiritum Dei accidens, et creaturam, vel saltem medium quid inter Deum et creaturam esse blasphemant? Witsf. in Symbol. Apostol. p. 76.

^c Judicium ecclesiae catholicae de necessitate credendi, &c.

“ of acknowledging three persons in the divine nature, nor that Christ in particular is the eternal Son of God: this heretical notion our church abominates and detests, as an heinous impiety, and what was never heard of in the writings of the primitive christians^a.” Thus far he, in relation to our divines of the church of England.

As to the divines of the separation, they are known to have been as zealous as any men could be, for the necessity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, as the sum and kernel of the christian religion, the basis, or foundation of the christian faith. The testimonies of Mr. Baxter, Mr. Corbet, Dr. Manton, and Dr. Bates, to this purpose, may be seen at one view in a late writer^b: to those might be added Dr. Owen^c, and Mr. Lob^d, and perhaps many more. In short, all parties and denominations of christians, who

^a Nicholls's defence of the church of England. Part I. C. 9. Mr. Scrivener, long before, (A. D. 1672.) had passed the like censure.

Hunc [Socinum] non minima ex parte secutus Episcopus, et ipse antiquitatis (quod norunt docti) imperitus, novam credendi imo et philosophandi licentiam, regulamque affectavit: et—mysteria christianæ Fidei summa, tam singulari et inaudito acumine, vel crasso potius fastu, tractavit, ut non pertimescat liberos cuivis fidei eos articulos de S. S. Trinitate permittere, absque quibus constans et foederalis fides docuit, nullum ad vitam immortalem aditum patere christianis. Scrivener. Apolog. adv. Dallæum, in Præfat.

^b Mr. Eveleigh's preface to a treatise intituled, The Deity of Christ proved fundamental.

^c Owen's *Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*, præf. p. 64.

^d Growth of Error, p. 3, 50, 69, 75, &c.

who appear to have had the truth of the doctrine at heart, or any good degree of zeal for it, have contended equally for the necessity of believing it, and have refused communion with the impugners of it.

II. I come next to observe something of the general principles upon which they build, who assert the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, and who refuse communion with the open impugners of it.

1. They lay it down as a certain and indisputable principle, that there are some scripture doctrines of greater importance than others: and they generally make their estimate of that greater importance, by the relation or connexion which any doctrine is conceived to have with christian practice, or worship, or with the whole œconomy of man's salvation by Christ^a; or by its being plainly, frequently, or strongly inculcated in holy scripture. Doctrines of this character are commonly stiled necessities, essentials, fundamentals, prime verities, and the like. Not that I mightily like the word necessary, in this case, being a word of equivocal meaning, and great ambiguity, leading to mistakes, and furnishing much matter for cavils. For when we come to ask, necessary to what? or, necessary to whom? and in what degree? then arises perplexity; and there is need of a multitude of distinctions to set the matter clear,

so

^a See Dr. Sherlock's vindication of the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet. Printed in 1682. C. 5. p. 256, &c.

so as to serve all possible cases. A doctrine may be said to be necessary to the being of the church, or to the salvation of some persons so and so qualified, or to the salvation of all: and many questions may arise about the precise degree of the necessity in every instance. But it is easily understood how one doctrine may be said to be more important than another; as more depends upon it, or as it more affects the vitals of christianity, than doctrines of another kind: and we need look no further than to the nature and reason of things, and to the analogy of faith, to be able to distinguish what doctrines are thus important in the general, and what not. Yet there is no giving an exact catalogue of those important, or fundamental doctrines; though it is for the most part easy to say of any particular doctrine which may be mentioned, what class it may be reasonably referred to; and whether, or how far, it may be worth contending for. We cannot give a compleat catalogue of virtues, any more than of articles of faith, so as to be positive, that those particular virtues, and in such a particular degree, are necessary to all persons, or to any person that shall be named. The precise quantity of virtue (if I may so call it) absolutely necessary to salvation, is no more to be defined, than the precise quantity of faith. Yet we know, in the general, that sincere and universal obedience to what God commands (allowing for infirmities) is necessary to salvation:

vation: and in like manner, sincere and universal assent to what God reveals, makes up the other part of the terms of acceptance; as faith and obedience together make up the whole.

2. They who assert the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, take it for granted, among christians, that faith in the gospel of Christ, is necessary to the salvation of all men, who are blessed with gospel light; and that men shall perish eternally for unbelief, for rejecting that gospel faith, once sufficiently propounded to them: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned*^a.

3. They conceive farther, that as we are in duty bound to receive the gospel faith, so are we likewise obliged, and under pain of damnation, to preserve it whole and entire, so far as in us lies; and neither to deprave it ourselves, nor to take part with them that do. It is our bounden duty to *hold fast the form of sound words—in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus*^b: to be *sound in the faith*^c: to *speak things which become sound doctrine*^d: to *examine whether we be in the faith*^e; and in a word, to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints*^f. So much for the obligations

^a Mark xvi. 15, 16. compare John iii. 36. Rev. xxi. 8.

^b 2 Tim. i. 13.

^c Tit. i. 13. ii. 2.

^d Tit. ii. 1.

^e 1 Tim. i. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 3.

^f 2 Cor. xiii. 5. comp. Rev.

xiv. 12.

^f Jude 3, comp. 1 Tim. iv. 6.

ligations we lie under, to keep the faith of Christ whole and undefiled. Next, we are to observe how dangerous a thing it is, to corrupt the true faith in any heinous degree, either by adding to it, or taking away from it. One of the earliest instances of gross corruption by adding to the faith of Christ, appeared in the converted jews, or judaizing christians, who taught the necessity of observing circumcision and the law of Moses, together with christianity. Against those false apostles, who taught such pernicious doctrine, St. Paul drew his pen, looking upon them as subverters of the gospel of Christ^a. And he was so zealous in that matter, as to say, *Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed^b*. Where by another gospel, he does not mean another religion substituted in the room of christianity; (for those false teachers were christians still, not apostates) but some adulterous mixtures, tending to evacuate the gospel law, and to frustrate the grace of God^c.

I shall give a second instance of gross corruption; not in adding to, but in taking from the christian doctrine, in an article of very great importance. There was in the days of the apostles, and after, a sect of opiniators, who, (whether being ashamed of the cross of Christ, or whether thinking it impossible for
God

^a Gal. i. 6, 7.^b Gal. i. 8.^c Gal. ii. 21. v. 2.

God to become man^a) were pleased to deny that Christ Jesus had any real humanity, but that he was a kind of walking phantom, or apparition; had no human flesh, but imposed upon the eyes, and other senses of the spectators. These men were afterwards called docetæ, and phantasiastæ; which one may well enough render visionists, or visionaries. We are next to take notice, how St. John treated them, and what directions he gave to other christians concerning them. He considered them as deluding teachers, that subverted foundations; and he gave them the name and title of antichrists. *Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist^b, &c.* In another place, speaking of the same men, he says, *Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a deceiver, and an antichrist^c.* It is manifest that he does not point his censure at the jews, who denied that the Messiah was come; for he speaks of new men that had then lately entered into the world, whereas the jews had been from the beginning: besides, that the jews did not deny that Jesus (or the man called Christ Jesus) had come in the flesh. Therefore,

^a Alii quoque hæretici usque adeo Christi manifestam amplexati sunt divinitatem, ut dixerint illum fuisse sine carne, et totum illi susceptum detraxerint hominem, ne decoquerent in illo divini nominis potestatem, &c. Novat. C. xxiii. p. 87. Edit. Welchman.

^b 1 John iv. 3.

^c 2 John 7.

Therefore, I say, St. John levelled not this censure of his against the jews, but against some christian heretics of that time, and those particularly that denied our Lord's humanity; in opposition to whom, he exhorts the brethren to abide in the doctrine of Christ^a, and not to receive the gainfayers into their houses, nor to salute them with God speed, lest they should become thereby partakers of their evil deeds^b. By evil deeds I understand the overt acts of that heresy, the teaching, spreading, and inculcating it. Thus heresies, that is, the teaching or promoting of pernicious doctrines, are reckoned among the works of the flesh^c, by St. Paul: who also calls false teachers deceitful workers^d, and evil workers^e; because the promoting and encouraging of false and dangerous doctrines, is a very ill practice, a wicked employ: which I hint, by the way, for the clearer explication of St. John's meaning in the phrase of evil deeds.

I shall mention a third scripture instance of gross corruption in doctrine, which was the denial of a future resurrection; dangerous doctrine, subversive of christianity. St. Paul very solemnly admonished the Corinthians^f, to prevent their giving ear to such pernicious suggestions: and he afterwards excommunicated Hymeneus, Philetus, and Alexander, for spreading

^a 2 John 9.^b 2 John 11.^c Gal. v. 19, 20.^d 2 Cor. xi. 13.^e Philip. iii. 2.^f 1 Cor. xv.

ing and propagating them, delivering the men over to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme^a.

From the three instances now mentioned, it may sufficiently appear, that the corrupting or maiming christianity in its vitals, by denying or destroying its prime articles, or fundamental doctrines, is a very dangerous thing; and that we are obliged, under pain of damnation, neither to do it ourselves, nor to abet, countenance, or encourage those that do, by communicating with them.

4. But it is farther to be observed, that in slighter matters, in things not nearly affecting the vitals of christianity, the rule is for christians to bear with one another; not to divide or separate, but to agree among themselves; so to disagree in harmless opinions, or indifferent rites, as to unite in faith and love, and in christian fellowship^b. Peace is a very valuable thing, and ought not to be sacrificed even to truth; unless such truth be important, and much may depend upon it. A man is not obliged, in all cases, to declare all he knows; and if he does declare his sentiments, and knows them to be true, yet he need not insist upon them with rigour, if the point contested be of a slight nature or value, in comparison to the church's peace. Let him enjoy his own liberty in that case; and let others have theirs

^a Compare 1 Tim. i. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18.

^b Rom. xiv, xv. Coloss. ii. 16, 17.

theirs too; and so all will be right. Let them differ, so far, by consent, and yet live together in peace and charity. But then, as to weightier matters, it concerns us carefully to observe, that rules of peace are but secondary and subordinate to those of piety or charity, and must veil to them. Peace must be broken in this world, whenever it is necessary to do it for the securing salvation in the next for ourselves, or others: and a breach of peace, in such instances, is obedience to the higher law of charity, is conforming to the primary and great commandments, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. Therefore peace, in such cases, must be sacrificed to truth and charity, that is, to the honour of God, and the eternal interests of mankind.

These things premised, it remains now only to inquire, what kind of a doctrine the doctrine of the Trinity is; whether it be of such a slight and indifferent nature, as not to be worth the insisting upon at the expence of peace; or whether it be of such high value and importance, that it ought to be maintained as an essential of christianity against all opposers. This is the great question now before us, and I shall endeavour to examine into it with due care and application.

The gentlemen who look upon it as a non-fundamental, have several things to urge, but such as may most of them be reduced to three heads, as follow. 1. That the received doctrine of the Trinity is not clear enough to be admitted for a fundamental.

fundamental. 2. That it is merely speculative, or however, not practical enough to be important. 3. That it is not sufficiently insisted upon in scripture, as of necessity to salvation. Now, in return to these three considerations, I shall endeavour to shew, in so many distinct chapters, that the doctrine is sufficiently clear, and also practical, and insisted upon likewise in scripture, as much as the nature of the thing needs, or requires.



THE
IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE
OF THE
TRINITY
ASSERTED, &c.

CHAP. I.

Shewing that the doctrine of the Trinity is sufficiently CLEAR to be admitted as a FUNDAMENTAL article.

CLEAR may be considered in two views, either with respect to the matter of the doctrine, or with respect to the proofs upon which it rests. Let us examine the thing both ways.

I. It may be suggested, that the doctrine is not clear, with regard to the matter of it: It is mysterious doctrine. Be it so: The tremendous Deity is all over mysterious, in his nature, and in his attributes, in his works and ways.

C

It

It is the property of the divine Being to be unsearchable: And if he were not so, he would not be divine. Must we therefore reject the most certain truths concerning the Deity, only because they are incomprehensible, when every thing almost belonging to him must be so of course? If so, there is an end, not only of all revealed religion, but of natural religion too; and we must take our last refuge in downright atheism. There are mysteries in the works of nature, as well as in the word of God; and it is as easy to believe both as one. We do not mean, by mysteries, positions altogether unintelligible, or that carry no idea at all with them: We do not mean unsensed characters, or empty sounds: But we mean propositions contained in general terms, which convey as general ideas, not descending to particulars. The ideas are clear so far as they go; only they do not reach far enough to satisfy curiosity. They are ideas of intellect^a, for the most part; like the ideas which we form of our own souls: For spiritual substance, at least (if any substance) falls not under imagination, but must be understood, rather than imagined. The same is the case with many abstract verities, in numbers especially; which are not the less verities for being purely intellectual, and beyond all imagery. Reason contemplates them, and clearly too, though fancy can lay no hold of them, to draw their picture in the mind. Such, I say, are our ideas of the
divine

^a See Addenda, p. 496.

divine Being, and of a Trinity in Unity; ideas of intellect, and general; intelligible as far as the thing is revealed, and assented to so far as intelligible. We understand the general truths, concerning a Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: We understand the general nature of an union and a distinction; and what we understand, we believe. As to the minute particulars relating to the manner, or modus of the thing, we understand them not: our ideas reach not to them, but stop short in the generals, as our faith also does. For our faith and our ideas keep pace with each other; and we believe nothing about particulars whereof nothing is revealed^a, neither expressly, nor consequentially.

Such a general assent as I have mentioned, is what we give to the truth of the divine perfections, Necessary-Existence, Eternity, Ubiquity, Prescience, and the like^b. Whatever obscurity, or defect there is in our Ideas of the divine attributes, we think it no good reason for denying either the general truths, or the importance of them. So then, no just objection can be made against the importance of any doctrine, from its mysterious nature. The most mysterious of all are in reality the most important; not because they are mysterious, but because they relate to things divine, which must
of

^a See the subject of mysteries treated of more at large either in my First defence, Qu. XXI. p. 308, &c. or in Norris's account of reason and faith, p. 117, 118. Or in Mr. Browne's Lecture Sermons for Lady Moyer, p. 257.—262.

^b See my First defence, Qu. XXI. p. 306, &c.
Second defence, Qu. XXI. p. 425, alias 430.

of course be mysterious to weak mortals, and perhaps to all creatures whatever. But even mysterious doctrines have a bright side, as well as a dark one; and they are clear to look upon, though too deep to be seen through.

It has been sometimes objected, that however clear the doctrine may seem to be to men of parts and learning, yet certainly it cannot be so to common Christians. But why not to common Christians, as well as to others? It is as clear to them as most other high and divine things can be. It is as clear, for instance, as the divine Eternity, or Omnipresence. Every common Christian professing Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to be so distinct as not to be one the other, and so united as to be one God, has as clear an idea of what he says, as when he prays, *Our Father which art in heaven*; or when he repeats after the Psalmist, *Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways*^a. And, I am persuaded, upon examination, he will be able to give as good an account of the one, as he will of the other. The thing is plain, and intelligible in either case, but in the general only, not as to the particular manner. Ask, how three are one, and probably both catechumen and catechist will be perfectly at a nonplus: Or ask, how God is in heaven, and how about our path, or our bed, and they will both be equally confounded. But, by the way, let

^a Psalm cxxxix. 2.

let it be here considered, whether common Christians may not often have clearer ideas of those things, than the bolder and more inquisitive, because they are content to rest in generals, and to stop at what they understand, without darkening it afterwards by words without knowledge. The notion of Eternity for instance, is a clear notion enough to a common Christian: But to a person that perplexes himself with nice inquiries about succession, or past duration, that very first notion which in the general was clear, may become obscure, by his blending perplexities with it. The same may be said of Omnipresence. The general notion of it is competently clear: But when a man has been perplexing his thoughts with curious inquiries about a substantial or a virtual presence, about extension, or non-extension, and the like; I question whether at length he may come away with so clear or just ideas of the main thing as may be found in any common Christian. So again as to divine Fore-knowledge and Free-will, they are both of them clearly understood, as far as they need be, by every plain Christian; while many a conceited scholar, by darkening the subject with too minute inquiries, almost loses the sight of it. In like manner, to apply those instances to our present purpose, common Christians may sometimes better preserve the true and right general notion of the doctrine of the Trinity, than the more learned inquirers: And it is observable, what Hilary of Poitiers, an honest and a knowing man of

the 4th century, testifies, that the populace of that time, for the most part, kept the true and right faith in the Trinity^a, when their ministers, several of them, by prying too far into it, had the misfortune to lose it.

While I am treating of the case of common Christians, I cannot omit the mentioning an artifice much made use of by those who would depreciate the doctrine of the Trinity, as not clear enough to be an important article: They first enter into all the niceties and perplexities which subtle disputants have ever clogged the subject with, and then they ask, whether common Christians can be supposed to see through them. No certainly: neither need they trouble their heads about them. It is one thing to understand the doctrine, and quite another thing, to be masters of the controversy. It is not fair dealing with us, to pretend it necessary for every common Christian, if he believes in the Trinity, to form just conceptions of it in every minute particular: For, by the same argument, it might as well be pleaded, that they are not obliged to believe in God, nor indeed in any thing. God is without body, parts or passions, according to the first article of our Church.

^a Et hujus quidem usque adhuc impietatis fraude perficitur, ut jam sub Antichristi Sacerdotibus Christi Populus non occidat, dum hoc putant illi fidei esse quod vocis est. Audiunt Deum Christum; putant esse quod dicitur. Audiunt Filium Dei: putant in Dei nativitate inesse Dei veritatem. Audiunt ante tempora: putant id ipsum ante tempora esse quod semper est. Sanctiores Aures plebis, quam corda sunt sacerdotum. Hilar. contr. Auxent. 1266. Ed. Bened.

Church. How many minute perplexing inquiries might there not be raised upon the three particulars now mentioned? And who can assure us, that common Christians may not be liable to entertain some wrong conceptions in every one of them? Must we therefore say that the general doctrine of the existence of a Deity is not clear enough to be important doctrine, or that common Christians are not bound to receive it as a necessary article of their faith? See how far such objections would carry us. But since these objections ought to have no weight at all in other parallel cases, or nearly parallel, they ought certainly to be the less regarded in respect to the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. Let but this doctrine have as fair usage as other christian and important doctrines are allowed to have, and then I am persuaded, there will be no pretence left for saying, that it is not a clear doctrine, clear in the general, clear in the main thing, to any Christian whatever. It is horrible misrepresentation of the case, to pretend as if we taught, that "the eternal interest of every
" plowman or mechanick hangs on his adjusting the sense of the terms, Nature, Person,
" Essence, Substance, Subsistence, Coequality,
" Coessentiality, and the like." No; those are technical terms, most of them proper to divines and scholars: And not only plowmen and mechanicks, but very great scholars too, lived and died in the conscientious belief of the doctrine of the Trinity, long before any of those terms

came in. They are of use indeed for settling the controversy with greater accuracy among divines, who understand such terms: But the doctrine itself is clear without them, and does not want them, but stands firm and unshaken, independent of them. Any plain man may easily conceive, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are properly divine, are not one the other, and yet are one God, by an intimate union; and that the Son in particular, being God and man, is one Christ. These prime verities and whatsoever else is necessarily implied in them, may be conceived to be right; and whatsoever is contrary to them, or inconsistent with them, will of consequence be wrong. This is enough for any plain Christian to know or believe; and he is not ordinarily obliged to be more minute in his inquiries, or to understand scholastick terms. It is not to be expected that common Christians should be expert disputants in controversies of faith, any more than that they should be profound casuists in relation to practice: Yet christian practice is necessary to salvation, and so is christian faith too; and the obligation to obey a general precept, or to believe a general truth, is not superseded, or evacuated by a man's being unacquainted with terms of art, or by his being liable to mistake in some remote, or minute circumstances belonging to the doctrine itself.

To make the thing yet plainer, let us take some general rule of christian practice; the rule, suppose, of *dealing with others as we would be*

be dealt with: A rule of such importance, that, by our Lord's account of it, it is the sum and substance of *The Law and the Prophets*^a. Surely then, it is a rule designed for common Christians, and such as both deserves and requires their most careful notice. Next, let us view this rule under all its minutenesses, or particularities; its distinctions, limitations, and explications, with which it is dressed out by knowing and able divines^b. Observe thereupon, what an operose business is made of this so plain and familiar rule, what pains are taken to clear it of all seeming repugnancies, to make it reasonable, to make it certain, to make it practicable, and to guard it most effectually against the many possible ways, whereby it may be misconstrued, eluded, perverted, frustrated. Are common Christians equal to all those niceties, or are they able to grasp them? I conceive not. And yet I dare be confident that a plain unlettered man, of tolerable sense, and who has not a mind to deceive himself, might be safely trusted with the naked rule, and would but seldom, if ever, either misunderstand it (so far as concerns his own case) or misapply it. He would keep the plain even road, and would scarce believe the man that should tell him, that it was strowed with thorns, or that hundreds had been, or might be either embar-

^a Matt. vii. 12.

^b See particularly Archbishop Tillotson's Sermon on Matt. vii. 12. separately published in 1709. And Collier's Essay of Honeſty, Part iv. p. 56, &c.

embarrassed in it, or bewildered by it. The same thing is true with respect to the general doctrine of the Trinity. For though there are many possible ways of mistaking it, or perverting it (as there are many crooked lines to one straight) and it concerns divines to guard minutely against all; yet less may suffice for common Christians; ordinarily, I mean at least. The right faith in the Trinity is short, and plain; and whatever crosses upon it, is wrong: *Index est rectum sui, et obliqui*: Truth shows itself, and is for the most part to every honest mind a guard sufficient against the mazes of error.

I have dwelt the longer upon this article, because the objection about common Christians, appears a popular and plausible one, and is often repeated in this cause, though there is really no weight in it. The author of the sober and charitable Disquisition need not be in pain for common Christians, lest they should not have skill enough to unite the two natures in Christ without confounding them, or dividing the person, in their apprehensions^a. They will as easily conceive that God and man is one Christ; as that soul and body is one man; and they need not look farther. Without troubling themselves at all with the names either of natures or persons they may joyfully and thankfully remember, that he *who is over all God blessed for ever*^b, became a man for their sakes, and died for them, in order to bring them to God.

^a Sober and charitable disquisition, p. 22, ^b Rom. ix. 5.

God. What is there in all this, that should either offend or perplex, or should not rather greatly edify common Christians? They may be more accurate in their thoughts on this head, than the great Patriarch and Abbot NESTORIUS and EUTYCHES^a, (for they were not both Patriarchs, as this author stiles them) because they will indulge their fancies less, and rest in the general truth, without drawing a false modus, or any modus upon it, either to corrupt, or to obscure it: They will abide in the true doctrine, without defiling it, (as those great men did) with over officious and presumptuous speculations. It may be allowed, that common Christians have but very little apprehension^b of some minute or remote considerations given in by way of answer to as minute and remote objections, in order to clear the doctrine in every punctilio: And in like manner, they have but very little apprehension of several such remote considerations thrown in by divines, in their disputes with Atheists or Deists, in order to clear the doctrine of the divine Being and attributes, or of the authority of Scripture, and to make every thing at length conformable and consistent. But what then? does it therefore follow, that common Christians may not believe in God, or in God's word, or that such belief is not important? Common Christians believe enough, if they believe the main things under a general view, without branching

^a See Sober and charitable, &c. p. 22.

^b See Sober and charitable, &c. p. 23.

branching them out into all the minute particulars, which depend upon them, or belong to them. Let divines see, that every article of faith is clear and consistent throughout, when traversed as far as the acutest objector can carry it: But let common Christians be content with every article in its native simplicity, as laid down in Scripture for edification of the faithful, and not as it appears in controversial books, or confessions, with all its armour about it, for the conviction or confusion of gainfayers. But I am afraid I have exceeded on this head, and have overburdened the reader. Upon the whole, the doctrine of the Trinity must be allowed to be sufficiently clear, as to the matter of it.

2. The next consideration is, that it is clear also, as to the proofs upon which it rests: It may be clearly proved, as well as clearly conceived. Indeed, the truth of the doctrine ought to be supposed in our present question, as previously known and admitted. Accordingly, our remonstrant brethren, who first disputed the importance of our doctrine, made no scruple of allowing the truth of it, as I have before hinted. They allowed the scripture proofs to be so far clear, as to oblige us to admit the doctrine for a certain truth^a.

Neither

^a Hinc colligo, mirum videri non debere, si tribus hisce personis una eademque natura divina tribuatur, cum iis scriptura divina, istas perfectiones, quæ naturæ divinæ propriæ sunt, tam exertè attribuat.

Neither are we much beholden to them for this seeming courtesy, since the proofs are numerous, and so cogent, that every ingenuous and sensible man must plainly see, that were scripture alone to decide the question, and no false philosophy or metaphysics brought in to confound or perplex it, there could scarce be any room left for debate about it. I do not mean, that many scripture texts may not be speciously urged on the other side: But what I mean, is, that upon the summing up of the evidence on both sides, and after ballancing the whole account, the advantage is so plainly ours, according to all the approved rules of grammar or criticism, that there is nothing at all left on the other side, whereby to turn the scale, except it be some pretended absurdity, or absurdities, in point of reason, charged upon us, by the help of dialectical or metaphysical subtleties; which yet, after all, are meer fallacy and sophistry, and have no real strength in them. We must therefore insist upon it as certain fact, that our doctrine is clear enough, with respect to the scripture-evidences produced for it. Scripture in its plain, natural, obvious, unforced meaning, says it; and reason does not gainsay it: Upon these two pillars our cause rests. Upon this bottom Bishop Bull fixes it: "The Antitritarians can never produce a demonstrative reason to prove that it cannot be, and divine Revelation assures us, that so it is."

To

To the same purpose speaks Mr. Howe: "That
 " there is a Trinity in the Godhead, of Fa-
 " ther, Son (or Word) and Holy Ghost, is
 " the plain obvious sense of so many scrip-
 " tures, that it apparently tends to frustrate
 " the design of the whole scripture revela-
 " tion, and to make it useless, not to admit
 " this Trinity, or otherwise to understand such
 " scriptures^a." In like manner Dr. Burnet of
 the Charterhouse, a noted man, and known to
 have had as little of a bigot in him, as any one,
 says thus: "We are obliged, according to that
 " light which God hath vouchsafed to us, in
 " the dispensation of the gospel, to believe
 " and profess that Jesus of Nazareth is the
 " Messiah, and likewise God. If we mistake
 " in this faith, the mistake is so far from
 " being voluntary, that it is inevitable. For we
 " follow, according to the best of our appre-
 " hension, the guides which God has given us,
 " St. John, and Paul the apostle. To these
 " sacred writers, we assent and adhere, inter-
 " preting them according to the genuine force
 " and received use of words: For neither Christ,
 " nor the abovesaid writers have told us, that
 " those sacred oracles were written in any other
 " style, or that they were to be interpreted in
 " any other manner^b."

The

^a Howe's *Calm Discourse of the Trinity in the God-Head*,
 p. 136, 137.

^b Judgement of Dr. Thomas Burnet, p. 11, 12.

Printed for Roberts, 1732.

See the Original. de Fid. et Offic. C. viii p. 134.

And compare my viith Sermon, p. 276, 277, 278, 279.

The late learned Professor Franck, of Hall in Saxony, speaking to the Antitrinitarians, expresses himself thus, "Though you allow the scriptures of the New Testament, you nevertheless boldly and arrogantly contradict the truth, clearly shining before your eyes, and express testimonies proposed in such simple and plain words, that even a child may read and understand them^a."

I cite these testimonies, not in the way of authority, but only to give the reader a clearer idea of what the Trinitarians go upon: For, they are all, so far, in the same strain, and these testimonies are offered only as samples, whereby to judge of the rest. Any indifferent stander-by may easily perceive, what, for the most part, has led the christian world to contend earnestly for the doctrine of the Trinity; namely, a conscientious dread of dishonouring him whom God the Father has commanded them to honour even as himself, a profound reverence for sacred writ, and an invincible persuasion that those Scriptures cannot, without the utmost violence, and most daring presumption, be interpreted otherwise than they interpret them. It would be tedious here to cite the particular texts which we ground our faith upon; and it would be highly improper, to fetch-in the whole dispute about the truth of the doctrine, into this other debate, which concerns only the

^a Franck's *Christus sacrae Scripturae nucleus*, p. 181, 182.

Translated out of German: printed by Downing, 1732.

the importance of it. Therefore referring the readers for the truth of the doctrine to other treatises lately printed, in great abundance, and well known, I shall content myself here with hinting two general arguments or considerations, such as may give the readers some notion of the irresistible force of our scripture proofs in this cause.

1. One is, that the proofs which we insist upon, cannot be evaded by any approved rules of language or criticism, but the last resort of our opposers commonly is to some philosophical principle, some pretended reason, drawn from the supposed nature of the thing, rather than from the scripture style, or from the force of scripture expressions. I have observed elsewhere^a, that such has been the method of eluding John i. 1. and several other texts, which are full and express as possible, for the real and proper divinity of our Lord. They are eluded, I say, upon this principle, that person and intelligent being are equivalent and reciprocal; or that there can be no medium between Tritheism and Sabelianism, or by something else of like kind: which is running off from the question about the scriptural-proof of the doctrine, to the natural possibility of the thing; and is not submitting to the obvious and apparent sense of sacred writ, but is tantamount to saying, that no scriptures can prove it: An evasion which
might

^a Defence, Q. xxii. p. 327. Edit. 4.

Second defence, Q. xxii. p. 438. 2^d Edit.

might equally serve for any texts whatever, were they ever so numerous, plain, and express. This kind of conduct on the opposite side, manifestly shews how hard they are pressed upon the foot of scripture; when, in the last result, they remove the cause from scripture to philosophy, from considerations of language and style and propriety of expression, to a foreign consideration, the rationale of the thing. This is a plain token that the letter is against them; only, they take the reason of the thing to plead so much in their favour, that it ought to over-rule any force of expression. So, they lay the main stress upon metaphysical subtleties^a, that is to say, upon human conjectures about things naturally unsearchable, in opposition to the express declarations of the word of God: which, by the way, is first setting up a false measure of truth; and, next, is making a new rule of faith. It is a false measure of truth, to make human conception the standard of it, since there may be a thousand, or ten thousand verities, which we cannot account for, or explain the manner of: and it is making a new rule of faith, if we resolve to believe nothing, but what we can comprehend; or if in cases where we can see no plain contradiction or absurdity, we chuse to make the letter of scripture bend to our own conceptions, rather than submit our wisdom to the wisdom of God. But this is not
the

^a See my First defence, p. 328, &c. 480. Second defence, p. 4. 68. 113. 431. 438.

the point which I am now upon; and so it suffices to have briefly hinted it, in passing. The use which I intended of the observation in this place, was to intimate the strength of our scripture-proofs, which drive the adversaries to such extremities.

2. Another yet more affecting and sensible argument of the same thing, is, that our antagonists, in eluding the scripture-proofs of the divinity of God the Son, have scarce left themselves any for the divinity even of God the Father; indeed none but what by the same artificial way of eluding, may be evaded and frustrated, as well as the other. This is a consideration of great weight, which has been pressed upon them over and over^a, and has never yet received a satisfactory answer. So it remains as a standing evidence of the glaring force of our scripture-proofs, and will ever remain so.

Upon the whole then, the doctrine of the Trinity must be acknowledged clear enough with respect to the scripture-proofs upon which it stands; provided always, that there is nothing plainly repugnant or contradictory in the notion. For, on the other hand, it must be allowed, that were the thing plainly absurd or impossible, no scriptures could prove it; but, in such a case, we should be obliged either to deny the authority of such scriptures (in whole,
or

^a Defence, p. 116.

Second defence, p. 245. alias 250, &c.

Third defence, p. 60, &c.

Compare Abbadie on Christ's divinity, p. 240.

or in part) or to have recourse to trope or figure, or any possible interpretation to solve the difficulty. This is not the case here: And therefore since the doctrine cannot be proved to be impossible in the nature of the thing, it is abundantly proved from scripture to be both possible and true. Reason never has, never can demonstrate the thing to be impossible: After repeated trials, 1400 years upwards and more, and all to no purpose, that should now be looked upon as a ruled point^a. I conclude then from what has been offered in this chapter, that the doctrine of the Trinity is clear enough to be important, both with respect to the matter of it, and the scripture-proofs upon which it stands: And therefore its pretended obscurity, or uncertainty can be no sufficient reason for throwing it off as a flight or indifferent article, not worth contending for, or insisting upon as an essential of faith, and a term of christian communion.

C H A P. II.

Shewing, that the same doctrine is no SPECULATIVE or NOTIONAL thing, but strictly PRACTICAL, and closely interwoven with the principles of the CHRISTIAN LIFE.

A RIGHT knowledge of God, and a practice conformable to it, and both in order to a more

^a See the state of the question, as to the possibility of the doctrine, in Second defence, p. 329, and in Mr. Browne's animadversions on two pieces, p. 5, 6, &c.

more compleat and blisful enjoyment, are not speculative or indifferent matters, but matters properly practical and of infinite concernment. If religious practice in any measure depends upon a previous knowledge of God (as undoubtedly it does) then certainly, for the like reason, the perfection of that practice depends upon the perfection of such knowledge. A general and confuse notion of God may produce as general and confuse rules of demeanour towards him; while a more particular and explicite apprehension of the Deity, will of course produce a more particular and explicite service. It is true, where God has not afforded such distinct knowledge, a less perfect service may and must suffice: But wherever much is given, much will be required, and from peculiar circumstances will arise peculiar obligations. If God be Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the duties owing to God, will be duties owing under that trine distinction; which must be paid accordingly: And whoever leaves out any of the three out of his idea of God, comes so far short of honouring God perfectly, and of serving him in proportion to the manifestation made of him. Supposing our doctrine true (as we are now to suppose) there will be duties proper to be paid to the Father as Father, and to the Son as Son, and to the Holy Ghost as the eternal Spirit of both; duties correspondent to their distinct offices and personalities, beside the duties common to all three, considered as one God. In short, the specification

tion of our worship, and the right direction of it, are nearly concerned in this doctrine: And therefore, if worship be a practical matter, this doctrine also is practical, and not a point of mere speculation^a. That worship is a practical thing, I suppose, no man of sense will dispute; or if any one does, it must be a dispute only about words, not affecting the main thing: Wherefore, it must be altogether wrong to imagine, that the doctrine of the Trinity is purely nominal, or has no connexion with practice^b. If the doctrine be true, it is sacrilege, and great impiety in every Christian to refuse to worship Father, Son or Holy Ghost: But if the doctrine be false, it is polytheism, and idolatry to pay religious worship to any person but the Father only. So much depends upon this single article.

The author of *Sober and charitable disquisition* labours this point extremely, for several pages together^c, and has perhaps said as much
and

^a See Dr. Webster's introductory discourses to Maimburgh's *History of Arianism*, p. 43, &c.

^b Nihil falsius est ea Remonstrantium calumnia, qua articulum de S. S. Trinitate ullum ad praxin usum habere inficiantur. Omnis doctrina veritatis, secundum pietatem est. Tit. i. 1. Et hæc tam notabilis, tam fundamentalis, non esset? Imo totius fidei, totius veræ religionis scaturigo est.—Nulla etiam religio est, nisi quis verum deum colat: non colit verum Deum, sed cerebri sui figmentum, qui non adorat in æquali divinitatis majestæte, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum sanctum. I nunc, et doctrinam eam ad praxin inutilem esse clama, sine qua nulla fidei aut pietatis Christianæ praxis esse potest. Witfius in *Symb. Apost.* p. 76.

^c *Sober and charitable disquisition*, p. 4.—23.

and as well as the cause will admit of. He endeavours to clear the arian worshippers of Christ from formal polytheism; and to retort the charge upon the orthodox worshippers; that so upon consideration that both parties may mean well, or in some respects may both offend, they may consent to bear with each other, and to unite in christian fellowship together. But, in my humble opinion, the thought is wide, and the project impracticable. There is no patching up any lasting or rational agreement of that kind, while the parties cannot unite so much as in the object of divine worship. He allows, that the opposers of Christ's divinity (properly so called) can pay him no more than inferior worship, such as if tendered to God, would manifestly dishonour and degrade him, would directly deny him to have divine perfections, and instead of honouring him as God, would degrade him into somewhat that is not God^a. Can those then who believe Christ to be God, and who honour him as such, ever think it reasonable or pious, to hold communion with men, who, by what they call inferior worship, do thus manifestly dishonour and degrade their God and Saviour, denying his divine perfections, degrading him into somewhat that is not God? Can the catholick believers ever suffer, or connive at such affronts offered (as they must esteem them) to God blessed for ever? How can they
ever

^a Sober and charitable disquisition, p. 8, 9.

ever justify either to God, or to the world, or to their own consciences, such a guilty neutrality in an affair of the highest consequence, in an article of the last importance? Mutual forbearance in doubtful points of speculative opinion, is very becoming fallible men, in consideration of our common frailty; but it is unreasonable, and morally impracticable, to come to any composition, where the parties differ so widely, and in so material a concern, as the object of divine worship. Religious men will be zealous for the honour of their Lord God, because they know, that they ought to be so; neither will they, nor can they countenance any coldness or indifference in so weighty a concern. Excessive heats perhaps may sometimes arise in such cases; for so long as religion is held in esteem, and believed to be worth the contending for, there must be contests about it, which may sometimes rise too high: But it is an error on the right hand, and much to be preferred to a cold indifference: as a strong athletick constitution, though subject sometimes to fevers, is yet vastly preferable to a constant lethargy. To return, the sum is, that the point of divine worship, is a critical point, a difficulty which cannot be got over, while both sides retain their respective principles; one looking upon the Son and Holy Ghost as creatures, and the other esteeming them as one God with the Father. For supposing that both parties were to join in the same solemn acts of outward

worship offered to Christ (for that he ought to be worshipped both sides allow) yet since the catholick side conceive that those religious acts are on the other side defiled by an irreligious meaning, and amount rather to a solemn mockery of their God and Saviour, than to a respectful remembrance of him; and that they are in reality, though not intentionally, flat polytheism and idolatry; I say, while the catholick believers are so persuaded, they cannot in prudence or in conscience, in piety to God or charity to men, consent to such known defilements of their solemn service; because it would be directly partaking in other men's sins. If it be said, that they need not judge all creature-worship to be polytheism and idolatry; I answer, they cannot avoid it, while they consider either Scripture itself, or the universal suffrage of antiquity in the best and purest ages. If it be further said, that they need not however think so hardly of creature-worshippers, as to charge them with guilt, since they may intend well; I answer, that a good intention is not sufficient to warrant an ill thing: Besides that, were they ever so guiltless, yet those of a contrary persuasion could not be so in countenancing by their own communion, what they cannot but look upon as great impiety and profanation. So, turn we this matter which way we will, the point of worship must be a parting point betwixt them, while they retain their opposite sentiments, with regard to the strict and proper divinity of Christ.

I shall

I shall not here enter into the debate about creature-worship, having distinctly and fully considered it elsewhere^a: Besides, that I may properly wave it, as it is wide and foreign to the cause now in hand. For whether such creature-worship be right or wrong, those that believe in Christ as a divine person, cannot join with those who worship him under the notion of a creature, and do not worship him as divine; because, as it has been before intimated, such inferior worship, (or whatever else we call it) is dishonouring and degrading him, and cannot but be rejected with abhorrence by all that seriously believe him to be really and strictly God.

As to what the author of *Sober and charitable disquisition* objects, that possibly some of our own people, who believe Christ to be God, may yet consider him merely as man, or as mediator^b, and not as God, in their acts of worship, it may be purely a surmise: But however the fact stands, there is no argument in it. We cannot answer for vulgar Christians, as to the notions

^a Defence, Q. xvi. p. 229, &c.

Second defence, Q. xxi. p. 374, &c.

Compare Bull's *Primitiva et Apostol. Traditio*. C. vi. p. 386, &c.

Bishop Smalbroke's *Idolatry charged on Arianism*.

Mr. Abr. Taylor's true scripture doctrine of the Trinity, p. 69, 448, &c.

Dr. Bishop's *Sermons*, p. 271—281.

Archbishop Tillotson's *Sermons*, Vol. I. p. 547, &c. fol. edit.

^b *Sober and charitable disquisition*, p. 21, 22, 23.

notions they may possibly entertain even of God the Father in their worship of him; neither can we be certain, whether sometimes they rise higher than those of an anthropomorphite. But I presume if any vulgar Christians ignorantly or innocently mistake, they are very willing to be set right by their more knowing guides, or by other sensible friends: which makes their case widely different from that of those who take upon them to justify creature-worship upon principle, and who separate Christ from the one Godhead in the worship of him, knowingly, and out of set purpose and design. We are not involved in guilt, merely by communicating with persons, whose errors (though perhaps great) we know nothing of, or who probably would correct them upon better instruction, or the first gentle admonition. Guilt is contracted by communicating with those who openly and resolutely corrupt the faith (knowingly and ignorantly) in very important articles. To join with such persons, is partaking in their impiety: it is not charity, but men pleasing, and betraying a disregard for the honour of God. But this general question will come over again, and will be more fully debated in a proper place.

Enough has been said to shew, that Christian worship is very nearly concerned in the question about the Trinity; and therefore the doctrine is strictly practical, and has a close connexion with the christian life. I decline entering into the main debate about creature-worship for the
reasons

reasons above hinted. Yet because the author of *Sober and charitable disquisition*, has advanced some things upon that article, which every reader may not know how to answer, I shall suggest a few considerations here by the way, to serve as hints or heads of solution, to the difficulties objected. 1. If that gentleman means to say, that the outward acts of civil homage, and religious worship are so equivocal and ambiguous, that there is no way left to distinguish them, it is disputing against fact, and amounts to telling us, that no one can distinguish in a case where no one can easily mistake, or ever has been mistaken. Civil homage is distinguishable from religious worship, by the circumstances^a always, and often by the nature of the acts themselves. That burning incense to Daniel^b was merely civil respect, will not be easily proved: Neither will the example of an idolatrous king, who would have done as much to an image, be sufficient to justify it; though the author speaks of it^c, as if both these points were indisputable. 2. Those outward acts, so and so circumstantiated, as to become religious worship, are what God has appropriated to Jehovah, to the true God, in the holy scriptures of the Old Testament, as exterior and visible acknowledgements of the divine sovereignty over all

^a See Stillingfleet's defence of the discourse concerning Idolatry in works, Vol. V. p. 344, 357.

^b Dan. ii. 46.

^c *Sober and charitable disquisition*, p. 6.

all creatures, and of the dependence which creatures have upon their creator: For, the reasons which God insists upon, why he, and he only is to be worshipped, are such as exclude all creatures whatever, viz. his being Jehovah, Creator, Sustainer, Preserver of all things^a. 3. To pay these exterior services, once so appropriated to God, to any creature, is idolizing the creature, or deifying the creature, and is both idolatry and polytheism. 4. Therefore the paying such exterior religious services to Christ, considered as a creature, must, according to the whole tenor of the Old Testament, be plain idolatry and polytheism. 5. The same rule for religious worship, obtains under the New Testament, as before under the Old: which appears, as from several other places, so particularly from our Lord's answer to satan^b, and from the angel's admonitions to St. John in the Revelations^c.

The author of *Sober and charitable*, &c. asks, Why the paying worship to an invisible Being, must imply its having divine perfections, and therefore must be divine worship^d? The reason is, because God has appropriated all such addresses, so and so circumstantiated, to the one Lord Jehovah; thereby making them (if they were not in their own nature before) a virtual
recognition

^a Isai. xl. Isai. xlv. 5, 6, 7. 2 Kings xix. 15. Jer x. 10, 11, 12. Compare my Sermons, p. 18, 19.

^b Matt. iv. 10.

^c Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 9. See those texts fully explained in Bishop Bull's *Primitiva et Apostolica Traditio*, C. iv. p. 388.

^d *Sober and charitable* disquisition, p. 8.

recognition of divine perfections^a; and therefore they interpretatively amount to divine worship. He adds, that this is proving the point, by taking it for granted, that none but God is to be worshipped. No, but it is proving the point in the best manner, and by the strongest evidences, namely, express scripture evidences, all the way from Genesis down to the Revelations, of such appropriation as hath been mentioned. In short then, God has so appropriated religious worship, as to exclude all creatures from any share in it: Therefore all religious worship is divine worship; and therefore to worship Christ, under the notion of a creature, is idolatry and polytheism. So stands this matter, which I have but briefly hinted, to take off this author's exceptions; referring the reader, as above, to other treatises, where the subject is considered at large^a. Now I return to the point I was upon, the practical nature of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Besides the influence which this doctrine has upon worship, it may be considered farther in a more general view, as tending to form within our minds dispositions proper for such state and circumstances as we are to expect hereafter. It is an allowed truth, that the good dispositions which men contract in this life, are their qualifications for the happiness of the life to come; and that the more refined and
raised

^a See preface to my Sermons, p. xlvii.

raised such their good dispositions are, the more fitly qualified they are for the higher degrees of blessedness in heaven. Put the case then, that the three persons of the Trinity are equally divine, and that a man has been trained up to esteem them accordingly, it cannot be doubted but that he goes out of the world more fitly disposed, in that respect, to be taken in friendship, and best qualified (other circumstances being equal) for the beatifick enjoyment. Consequently, the belief of the doctrine of the Trinity (supposing it true) is no slight or insignificant theory, no barren notion of speculation; since it has a direct influence upon the disposition of our minds here, and upon our happiness hereafter. I make not this an argument of the truth of the doctrine, (for that is not the point I am now upon) but of the importance of it, after admitting it for a sacred truth: And I add, that if it may have such influence upon us in creating proper dispositions, that comes to the same as to say, that it raises and improves our virtues, and all virtue is practical.

A further consideration of like kind may be drawn from the influence which the same doctrine has upon the motives to christian practice. There are no two motives more affecting or more endearing, or more apt to work upon ingenuous minds, than the love of God the Father in sending his beloved Son to redeem us, and the love and condescension of
our

our blessed Lord, in submitting to be sent. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son^a, &c. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him^b.* We see here what a stress and emphasis is laid, not merely upon this, that life, eternal life, is the benefit bestowed, but that it is conveyed in such a manner, and by such endearing means, by the only begotten Son. The Socinians, when pressed upon this article, do nothing but trifle and shuffle with us: They fall to magnifying the love of God, in giving us so high, so inestimable a blessing, as life eternal. Very true; but does not scripture, besides that, lay a particular emphasis upon the means made use of in conveying the grant? and how is this emphasis made out upon their hypothesis, that Christ is a mere man? But suppose him a creature, and the very first and highest of all creatures, before he came down from heaven; yet neither does that supposition sufficiently answer the purpose. For, considering how honourable the service was, and how unconceivably vast and large the reward for it, it might more properly be said, that God so loved his Son, that he sent him into the world, in order to prefer him to a kind of rivalry with himself, to advance him to divine honours, to make the whole creation bow

^a John iii. 16. ^b 1 John iv. 9. comp. Rom. v. 8. viii. 32.

bow before him, and pay him homage and obeisance^e: And all this as the reward of his sufferings of a few years; great indeed, but not apparently greater than many of his disciples suffered after him, nor *worthy to be compared with the glory*^f that shall accrue to every good Christian, much less with that immense, that incredible glory, which was to accrue to him^g. Now to me it seems, that the supposing Christ a mere creature, is a thought which mightily lessens the force of the scripture expressions representing God's sending his Son, as an act of stupendous love to man, upon account of the dignity of the person by whom that salvation was to be wrought: So that denying the divinity of Christ robs us in part of one of the most endearing and affecting motives to the christian life. Wherefore in this view also, the doctrine of the 'Trinity, if true, is both important and practical, as it raises the motives upon which christian practice is built. I do not say, there

^e Phil. ii. 10. Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. vii. 10.

^f Rom. viii. 18.

^g Equidem rem attentius perpendenti liquebit, ex hypothesi sive Sociniana, sive Ariana, deum in hoc negotio anctorem et dilectionem suam potius in illum ipsum filium, quam erga nos homines ostendisse. Quid enim? Is qui Christus dicitur, ex mera dei *indignia* et beneplacito in eam gratiam electus est, ut post brevem hic in terris Deo præstitam obedientiam, ex puro puto homine juxta Socinistas, sive ex mera et mutabili creatura, ut Ario-manitæ dicunt Deus ipse fieret, ac divinos honores, non modo a nobis hominibus sed etiam ab ipsâ angelis atque archangelis sibi tribuendos assequeretur, adeoque in alias creaturas omnes dominium atque imperium obtineret.

Bull, Judic. Eccl. Cathol. C. v. p. 313.

there would be no force in the motive considered in an arian view, and supposing Christ to have been a most excellent *creature*: But the force of it would be considerably less upon that supposition; and therefore, if the doctrine be a truth, it is a truth of some moment in a view to practice, as raising and enforcing the motives beyond what the other hypothesis does.

So again the love of Christ towards mankind, appears in a much clearer and stronger light upon the trinitarian principles, than upon the anti-trinitarian. For if Christ was in the form of God, equal with God, and very God, it was then an act of infinite love and condescension in him to become man, and die for us: But if he was no more than a creature, it was no surprising condescension to embark in a work so glorious, such as being the saviour of mankind, and such as would advance him to be Lord and Judge of the world, to be admired, revered, and adored both by men and angels, God himself also glorifying him, and sounding forth his praises through the utmost limits of the universe. Where is the condescension of a creature's submitting to be thus highly honoured? or what creature could there be, that could modestly aspire to it, or might not think it much above his pretensions, or highest ambition^a? In short,

“ to

^a Addo, neque ipsius Filii Dei unigeniti amorem et charitatem, erga nos homines (quæ etiam magnifice passim celebratur in

“ to become man, to suffer and die for the re-
 “ demption of the world, and to be made the
 “ Lord and Judge both of the quick and of the
 “ dead, can be an act of condescending love
 “ and goodness only in God. So that to deny
 “ the divinity of Christ, alters the very foun-
 “ dations of Christianity, and destroys all the
 “ powerful arguments of the love, humility, and
 “ condescension of our Lord, which are the pe-
 “ culiar motives of the gospel^b.” If either the
 work of redemption was too big for a creature
 to engage in, or if the honours attending it were
 too high for a creature to aspire after^c, then cer-
 tainly

in S. Scripturis, ac maxime in loco illo Epistolæ ad Eph. iii. 18, 19.) clarè elucere, nisi concipiamus Filium Dei qui ante sæcula ex Patre genitus est, per quem omnia facta sunt, qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem, descendit de cœlis et incarnatus est, &c. At vero hoc modo—Filii Dei eminentissima in figmentum suum dilectio—, clarissime conspici-
 tur. Bull, Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 311.

^b Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, C. v. p. 268.

^c Οἰκονομία, quæ ipsi tribuitur, Θεολογίαν necessario supponit ipsamque omnino statuit. Quid enim? Messiam sive Christum prædicant sacræ nostræ literæ et credere nos profiteamur omnes, qui sit animarum sospitator, qui nobis sit sapientia, justitia, sanctificatio, et redemptio—, qui preces suorum, ubivis sacrosanctum ejus nomen invocantium, illico exaudiat—, qui ecclesiæ suæ per universum terrarum orbem disseminatæ, semper præsto sit—, qui Deo Patri, σύνθετος, et in eadem sede collocatus sit—. Qui denique, in exitu mundi, immensa gloria et majestate refulgens, angelis ministris stipatus, veniet orbem judicaturus, non modo facta omnia, sed et cordis secreta omnium quotquot fuere hominum in lucem proditurus, &c. Hæccine omnia in purum hominem, aut creaturam aliquam competere? Fidenter dico, qui ita sentiat, non modo contra fidem, sed et rationem ipsam insanire.

Bull, Judic. Eccl. Cath. C. 1. p. 291, 292.

tainly the very notion of condescension is sunk and lost, upon every hypothesis which does not make Christ truly and properly God, God eternal. I am very sensible, that while I am arguing for the importance of the doctrine, I may seem at the same time to be pleading for the truth of it, and so to run unawares into the other question. But the two questions are so nearly allied, that I know not sometimes how to avoid it. The same considerations generally which prove one, must of course obliquely glance at the other also: and every scripture argument, which intimates the use and importance of the doctrine, must at least tacitly suppose, or insinuate the truth of it, and so in effect prove both in one. If scripture has laid down motives which are not naturally or reasonably accounted for, or understood, but upon the supposition of the truth of such a doctrine, then both the doctrine itself, and the practical nature of it, are at the same time insinuated: Which I mention here once for all, to prevent confusion, and now proceed to what remains.

The satisfaction or propitiation, for the sins of the world, made by Christ, is of great importance to the christian life, and seems also to have a close connexion with the doctrine of the Trinity. The truth of the satisfaction, and the necessity there was for it, may be substantially proved a posteriori, from scripture itself*, independent of the doctrine of the Trinity. But
after

* See a late rational and judicious Discourse upon this subject, intituled,

after proceeding so far, it will be difficult to clear and extricate that scripture doctrine, without admitting this other also: Because it is not reasonable to think that an creature could do more than was his bounden duty to do upon God's requiring it; or that he could by any services or sufferings attain to such a degree of merit, as should atone for a world of sinners; or that he should be intrusted with such an office (supposing him otherwise equal to it) as would of course draw after it the adoration and homage both of men and angels. The question properly here, is not, whether any thing less than God could pay an infinite satisfaction, but whether a creature could pay any, or could merit at all. If it be said, that God might accept it as he pleased, it may be said likewise, upon the same principle, that he might accept the blood of bulls, or of goats. Yet the Apostle tells us, that *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*^b: which words appear to resolve the satisfaction not merely into God's free acceptance, but into the intrinsic value of the sacrifice. And while we rest it upon that foot, I do not see why we may not say, that it is not possible for the blood of any creature to take away the sins of the world, since no creature can do more than his duty, nor can have any stock of merit to spare for other creatures.

intituled, Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and Man, printed for J. Noon, 1732.

^b Hebr. x. 4. Conf. Pearson on the Creed, Art. ii. p. 142.

tures. In this light, the scripture doctrine of the satisfaction infers the divinity of him that made it: and hence it is, that those who have denied our Lord's proper divinity, have commonly gone on to deny any proper satisfaction also; or while they have admitted it in words, or in name (as they admit also Christ's divinity) they have denied the thing. Scripture itself seems to resolve the satisfaction into the divinity of the person suffering. It was Jehovah that was pierced^d. It was God that purchased the church with his own blood^d; it was *ὁ θεοπότης*, the high Lord that bought us^e: it was the Lord of glory that was crucified^f. And indeed it is unintelligible, how the blood of a creature should make any proper atonement or expiation for sin, as before intimated. This again is another of those arguments, or considerations, which at once insinuate both the truth of our doctrine, and the importance of it. However, if scripture otherwise testifies that Christ is properly God, and if the same scriptures elsewhere, independently of our present argument, declare that Christ has atoned for us; then from these two propositions put together results this third, that a divine person has satisfied for us: consequently, whosoever destroys the divinity of Christ, justly

^c Zech. xii. 10. compared with John xix. 37.

^d Acts xx. 28. For the reading, consult Mill in loc.

^e 2 Pet. ii. 1. See Taylor's true Scripture doctrine, p. 391, &c.

^f 1 Cor. ii. 8. compare 1 John i. 7. Heb. ix. 14.

justly so called, does at the same time destroy the true notion of the satisfaction made by him. Hence it appears, at the lowest, that the doctrine of the Trinity involves several other important doctrines of Christianity with it, and gives another kind of turn and significancy to them, than what they would have without it: and therefore, most undoubtedly, it is no barren speculation, no indifferent or slight matter, but a doctrine of the foundation, nearly affecting the very vitals of Christianity, and the christian life.

The author of *Sober and charitable disquisition*, has spent several pages^g, to invalidate the argument drawn from the common doctrine of the satisfaction; and so I must stop for a while to examine what he says. He thinks it cannot be proved, that none but God could make such satisfaction^h. But I conceive, it may be proved from the nature of the thing, that no creature could merit; and from scripture, that he who made the satisfaction is God as well as man: and these two considerations taken together, do amount to what we pretend to. He himself allows, the truth of the aforesaid doctrine once proved, the consequence to be indisputable, that it was some way or other necessaryⁱ. This indeed is not the whole of what we are able to prove, as may appear from what hath been said: but even

^g *Sober and charitable disquisition*, p. 24.—35.

^h *Ibid.* p. 24.

ⁱ *Ibid.* p. 25.

even this is sufficient for our present purpose; namely, that if our doctrine is true, it must be important, because of the other important doctrines which hang upon it. Therefore the doctrine of the Trinity is no speculative opinion of slight value or significancy. If it be true, it is worth contending for, and earnestly too.

He asks, whether we are sure, that no being inferior to God could make full amends to divine justice*? We conceive, with very good reason, that no creature could merit with God, or do works of supererogation. I pass over what he observes about infinite satisfaction¹, not affecting the question as here by me stated. He asks, how we can be sure, that God cannot accept of the sacrifice of the best and most excellent of created beings? I say not, what God can, or cannot accept: I know nothing a priori about it. But scripture, as before observed, rests not this matter upon the foot of divine acceptance, but upon the intrinsic value of the sacrifice: and when we consider the thing in that view, we say, that a creature's services or sufferings carry no proper intrinsic merit in them. And we add further, that God has accepted no sacrifice less than a divine sacrifice, because we prove from other topics, that Christ our passover was strictly God, and he was sacrificed for us. In short,
the

* Sober and charitable disquisition, p. 25.

¹ Ibid. p. 25, 26, 27.

the question is not what God might have accepted, if he had so pleased, but whether, when he has chosen the way of expiation, and the scriptures lay a particular stress and emphasis upon it, as carrying intrinsic merit in it, both real and great, whether this can be justly accounted for, on the supposition that our Lord was no more than a creature^m.

The author goes on to raise difficulties, and to advance divers subtleties to perplex the notion of a compound person: most of them, I conceive, run beyond the mark, and might as soon prove that soul and body make not one person or man, as that God and man make not the one person of Christ. For example; he pleads that a person compounded of God and man, must be inferior in dignity to a person wholly and only divineⁿ. By the same argument, a man being partly spirit and partly body, is inferior in dignity to the separate soul, which is wholly and only spirit: and if there be any force in the argument, I know not how far it may affect the doctrine of a future resurrection. Now, we say, that the divine nature loses nothing
of

^m Verbo dicam: nulli creaturæ, licet excellentissima ea sit, excellentissimoque modo operetur, illud competat, ut vitæ æternæ præmium ei ex stricto jure debeatur. Præterquam enim quod bonum æternæ vitæ sit absolutissimum, immensum, infinitum, atque adeo omnia omnium creaturarum opera infinitis gradibus transcendens; illud etiam Apostoli, ἐρώτημα tale est, ut ei a nemine responderi possit: τίς προέδωκεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ; Rom. xi. 35.

Bull, Harmon. Apostol. Dissert. ii. C. 12. p. 409.

ⁿ Sober and charitable disquisition, p. 29.

of its dignity by assuming the human; but retains all the dignity it before had; and therefore the whole person becomes not inferior. He further pleads, that it is not God that dies, but God-man. Allowed: but still that person, that Christ, who is God, dies: as when a man dies, that person (who is soul, as well as body) dies. We never suppose that the godhead dies, any more than we imagine that the soul dies. He says further, that the person which makes the satisfaction, is not a divine person*. How so, when the person is both God and man, (as he had before allowed) in our scheme? Do we make two persons? He argues next against the humanity becoming part of the person of Christ. Nothing can really be this *who*, but must be *the what this who is*, at the same time. He might as justly argue, that Peter's body cannot be part of Peter, or of the person of Peter, together with his soul: because nothing can really be this *who* (Peter's soul) but must be what this *who is*, at the same time. Now taking for granted that Peter's soul is the whole person, the argument is good: and so it is likewise in the other case, taking it for granted, that the Logos in union, is still the whole person; but this is going upon false suppositions: and he might as soon prove that Peter's body cannot be part of Peter, unless it be his soul, as that Christ's humanity cannot be part of Christ, unless it

* Sober and charitable disquisition, p. 30.

it be the Logos. I can hardly conjecture what the author means, when he says, *That* human substance we call John, is really the person and nothing else^p. I thought, that John, or John's person, was made up of two substances, spiritual and bodily: and John, the person of John, dies, though one substance survives. In like manner, Christ the god-man dies, though the godhead dies not. He adds, much like to what he had said before, that the human nature can never be really *he*, unless he be also the divine nature. Does he mean by *he*, part of the person, or the whole person? If he means part, then it amounts to this; the body can never be really a part of Peter's person, unless it be Peter's soul: or if he means the whole, then it comes to this, that the body can never be the whole person, unless it be the soul. One of the propositions is manifestly against truth, and the other is not sense: so little can be effected in this way of reasoning. Indeed, all the confusion arises from the want of knowing or considering what the true notion of a person, simple or compound, is, of which I have elsewhere treated at large^q, and thither I take leave to refer the reader. In the mean while, I cannot but heartily lament and grieve, to find that serious and sensible men can give their minds to oppose a scriptural and venerable doctrine which has stood the test of ages, by such fine spun subtleties: Zeno's arguments
against

^p See Sober and charitable, &c. p. 34.

^q Second defence, Q. xv p. 365—369.

against motion, might appear weighty in comparison.

But we have more of the same kind still, which I shall reply to very briefly. ‘The dying humanity can have no such dignity.’ True, but the dying Christ might, and that suffices. ‘The human nature should really and truly be that divine person.’ No: part of the person is sufficient: the human nature constitutes one compound person with the divine nature. ‘The Logos could not really be man.’ Why? was not the word made flesh? that is, the word became incarnate, assumed humanity. ‘Humanity could not be assumed into a real communion of his person, without being assumed into what that person is.’ He must mean, I presume, without being converted into godhead. But why not, if bodies at the general resurrection may be assumed into a personal union with souls, without ceasing to be bodies, or being converted into spirits? ‘For the same thing (person) to be God and man at once, that is really and truly so, is surely as impossible as transubstantiation.’ And yet surely it is not more impossible than for the same human Being (call him Peter or John) to be both soul and body at once, really and truly so; which a man may firmly believe as a certain truth, without admitting transubstantiation, a palpable absurdity. ‘That man should really and strictly speaking, be a divine person,

or

* Sober and charitable, &c. p. 32.

* Ibid. p. 33

* Ibid. p. 34.

or a divine person man, to me seems utterly impossible^u.' If he means, that the divine nature is not the human, nor the human divine, he says right, and has no opposer: but if he means, that divine substance and human substance together, may not make one person, or one Christ, let him show why it is more impossible than for a spiritual substance and a corporeal substance to make one person, or one man. He adds, or repeats, that 'the death of the man is not the death of God^w.' But it is the death of Christ, who is God and man. So the death of the body is not the death of the soul; but it is the death of the man, who is both soul and body. Such is the nature of a personal union, and such the manner of speaking of it; and it is so obvious and common a case, that none but philosophers would mistake it.

The author closes his discourse on this head, with observing, that our opposers may carry the point of satisfaction as high as we do, and account as handsomely for it. As how? 'by supposing the Logos to be in as close an union with God, as we suppose Christ's humanity to be with the Logos^x.' Well then, it must be a personal union, so as to make the Father and the Logos one person. How then? 'Then the sufferings of the Logos will be as much as the sufferings of God, and as much an atonement for sin, as the death of Christ's human nature
in

^u Sober and charitable disq. p. 34. ^w Ib. 34. ^x Ib. p. 35.

in the other scheme^y. True: But then the sufferings of the Logos will be the sufferings of the Father (which is the ancient heresy of the patripassians) and the same person, both pays and accepts the ransom, makes an atonement to himself, which is not consonant to scripture, nor to common sense.

The author concludes his account of this matter, with this inference, that the men whom he has been pleading for, do not seem so deeply culpable, nor so dangerously mistaken^z, as is commonly represented. To me it appears quite the contrary; and from this very representation of his, whereby he intended to favour them. They are deeply culpable, 1. For making God the Son a creature, against the whole tenor of scripture. 2. For running into patripassianism, to help out arianism; heaping error upon error, heresy upon heresy. 3. For doing it, upon the strength only of a few dialectical, or metaphysical subtleties, scarce worthy to be offered, or so much as named, in so momentous a cause as this is. 4. For making use of such topics against the personal union of God and man, as might with equal force be urged against the personal union of any two substances whatever, and prove (if they prove any thing) that an human person is not made up of soul and body. 5. For condemning their opposers as void of charity, only for their pious, faithful, and extremely charitable

^y Sober and charitable disq. p. 34, 35.

^z Ibid. p. 35. ^{*} Ibid.

charitable endeavours to preserve their flocks from being led aside after satan, from imbibing sentiments subversive of the gospel of Christ. But I shall have more to say upon the head of charity in another chapter. I hope my reader will excuse my digressing thus far (if it be called a digression) upon the article of satisfaction, to attend the author who gave the occasion. Now I return.

I have been representing the practical nature and important uses of the doctrine of the Trinity, with respect to worship, in which all the three persons are interested; and I have more particularly pressed the importance of the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, from special considerations relating to the gospel motives, and the nature of the atonement made for sins. I ought not here to omit the like special considerations concerning the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of believing his divinity likewise. I shall chuse here to express myself in the excellent words of a celebrated writer, whom I have before quoted more than once. " Our salvation by Christ does not only consist in the
 " expiation of our sins, &c.—but in commu-
 " nication of divine grace and power to renew
 " and sanctify us: and this is every where in
 " scripture attributed to the Holy Spirit, as his
 " peculiar office in the œconomy of man's sal-
 " vation. And it must make a fundamental
 " change in the doctrine of divine grace and
 " assistance, to deny the divinity of the Holy
 " Spirit.

“ Spirit. For, can a creature be the univer-
 “ sal spring and fountain of divine grace and
 “ life? Can a finite creature be a kind of uni-
 “ versal soul to the whole christian church, and
 “ to every sincere member of it? Can a crea-
 “ ture make such close application to our minds,
 “ know our thoughts, set bounds to our pas-
 “ sions, inspire us with new affections and de-
 “ fires, and be more intimate to us than we are
 “ to ourselves? If a creature be the only instru-
 “ ment and principle of grace, we shall soon
 “ be tempted, either to deny the grace of God,
 “ or to make it only an external thing, and en-
 “ tertain very mean conceits of it. All these
 “ miraculous gifts, which were bestowed on the
 “ apostles and primitive christians, for the edi-
 “ fication of the church, all the graces of the
 “ christian life, are the fruits of the Spirit. The
 “ divine Spirit is the principle of immortality
 “ in us, which first gives life to our souls, and
 “ will at the last day raise our dead bodies out
 “ of the dust; works which sufficiently pro-
 “ claim him to be God, and which we cannot
 “ heartily believe, in the gospel-notion, if he
 “ be not”.

What this excellent writer has here said, ap-
 pears all to be very right and just; and his ob-
 servation of the doctrine of divine grace being
 likely to suffer much by a denial of the divi-
 nity of the Holy Spirit, has been too sadly
 verified

* Sherlock's vindication of the defence of Stillingfleet, p.
 270, &c.

verified in the event. How jejune, how sparingly, have the abettors of the new schemes insisted upon the doctrine of grace, and of the invisible workings of the Holy Spirit, though scripture is full of the subject? So that, besides the danger of losing the salutary doctrine of a proper satisfaction and expiation, we are further in danger of losing the true scripture notion of grace, by the opposition made to the doctrine of the Trinity. I believe I might appeal to the consciences of those gentlemen, whether their gratitude to Christ, for what he has done and suffered for us, be not in a manner lost, and swallowed up in their regards to the Father for commanding, and accepting it; and whether the notion of the grace of the Holy Spirit, be not intirely absorbed in the thought of the superior assistance of God. The effect is natural, and I judge in this case, by what I should find in myself. Upon their hypothesis, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost*^b, will amount only to the love of the Father thrice told; which supersedes both the other. And when it is said, that the Father and Son will make their abode with us^c, and in the same chapter, that the Holy Ghost also will abide with us for ever^d, the two creatures so joined with the Creator, will appear to be not only improperly, but superfluously added, while in one we have all, and there

^b 2 Cor. xiii. 14. ^c John xiv. 23. ^d John xiv. 16.

there is nothing but that one to be at all depended upon. His presence alone will supply every thing, and his lustre will so far eclipse both the other persons, that it will be hard to say (upon the hypothesis, I am mentioning) what occasion there would be for them; or what comfort in them. Such is the appearing change made in the very form and essence of Christianity by these new doctrines, that it seems to lose the very life and soul of it, and by degrees to degenerate into little else but a better kind of Judaism, retaining still the name of Christianity, but giving up the main things.

While we consider the doctrine of the Trinity, as interwoven with the very frame and texture of the Christian religion, it appears to me natural to conceive, that the whole scheme and œconomy of man's redemption was laid with a principal view to it, in order to bring mankind gradually into an acquaintance with the three divine persons, one God blessed for ever. I would speak with all due modesty, caution and reverence, as becomes us always in what concerns the unsearchable counsels of heaven: but I say, there appears to me none so natural, or so probable an account of the divine dispensations, from first to last, as what I have just mentioned; namely, that such a redemption was provided, such an expiation for sins required, such a method of sanctification appointed, and then revealed, that so men might know that there are three divine persons, might be ap-
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prized

prized how infinitely the world is obliged to them, and might accordingly be both instructed and incited to love, honour and adore them here, because that must be a considerable part of their employment and happiness hereafter. I urge not this as an argument of the truth of the doctrine, but as a consideration of great weight, supposing the doctrine true, for the recommending it to our affections, and for the raising our ideas of it. The divine dispensations appear both rational and amiable, considered in this light: and if it be not too bold to offer any rationale of them, I would humbly presume to say, that there is none so satisfactory, as what I have now mentioned. I can see no probable reason why the church of God should be, as it were, first put under the immediate conduct of the Father, then under the Son, and last of all, under the Holy Ghost; nor why the honour of creating should be principally ascribed to the first, and the honour of redemption, as considerable as creation, to the second, and the honour of illumination, sanctification, and miraculous gifts, as considerable as any thing before upon the third: I say, I can see no probable reason for these things (when the Father, as it should seem, might as well have had the sole honour of all) but upon the hypothesis which I have hinted^e.

But

^e Ac profectò admiranda mihi videtur divinarum personarum in sacrosanctissimâ Triade *oikonomia*, quâ unaquæque persona distincto

But however that be, or whatever other reasons divine wisdom, to us unsearchable, might proceed upon in every dispensation towards mankind, certain it is, that the doctrine of the Trinity, if true (as we suppose) runs through every part of christian theology, and gives as it were a new force and spirit to it.

I have been proving, from several topics, that this doctrine is important and practical, no slight, no speculative opinion. I shall add but one consideration more, and that a general one, applicable to all other articles of faith, and proving them to be practical in a large sense of the word, but a just sense too, and well deserving our notice. As we are commanded to believe whatever God reveals, belief itself is an instance of obedience; and unbelief, much more disbelief, is disobedience to the commands of God. Consequently, unless obedience and disobedience
are

distincto quasi titulo humanum imprimis genus imperio suo divino obstrinxerit, titulo illi respondente etiam distinctâ unius cujusque imperii patefactione. Patrem colimus sub titulo creatoris hujus universi, qui et ab ipsâ mundi creatione hominibus innotuerit; Filium adoramus sub titulo redemptoris ac servatoris nostri, cujus idcirco divina gloria atque imperium non nisi post peractum in terris humanæ redemptionis ac salutis negotium fuerit patefactum: Spiritum denique sanctum veneramur sub titulo paracleti, illuminatoris, et sanctificatoris nostri, cujus adeo divina majestas demum post descensum ejus in apostolos primosque Christianos, donorum omne genus copiosissimâ largitione illustrissimum clarius emicuerit. Nimirum tum demum apostoli, idque ex Christi mandato, gentes baptizabant in plenam atque adunatam Trinitatem.

Bull, primitiva Tradit. C. vi. p. 399.

are points of mere speculation, there is no room left for any pretence of that kind in the case now before us. Let the matter of the belief be otherwise ever so speculative, (though it is not the case here) yet to believe scripture verities, prime verities especially, is under precept, is express duty; and all duty is practical in a large sense, as it is paying obedience to God's commandments. St. Paul therefore, more than once, speaks of the obedience of faith^f, and with great propriety, since believing is obeying the will of God, and is intitled to a reward. It is true, faith and obedience (taking obedience in a more restrained sense) are often contradistinguished: but interpreting obedience in its fullest and most comprehensive meaning; faith is properly a species of it, another kind of obedience. Faith is a virtue, both a moral and a christian virtue, as a very ingenious and acute writer observes. “As
 “ to the nature of faith, it is plain that it is a
 “ moral virtue, as being that natural homage,
 “ which the understanding or will (for I need
 “ not here dispute which^g) pays to God, in
 “ receiving and assenting to what he reveals, upon
 “ his bare word, or authority: it is an humili-
 “ liation of ourselves, and a glorification of God.
 “ And as it is a moral, so it is also a christian
 “ virtue, as being a duty commanded in the
 “ gospel,

^f Rom. i. 5. xv. 18. xvi. 19. 26. Conf. Acts vi. 7.

Vid. Wolfii curæ Philolog. et criticæ ad Rom. xvi. 19.

^g See that point fully discussed in Fiddes's Body of Divinity, Vol. I. p. 333, &c.

“gospel, and an act of christian humility^h.” If it be objected, that faith depends intirely upon evidence, and therefore is no matter of choice, and therefore is no virtue, nor can properly fall under precept; I deny that faith depends intirely upon evidence, though it ought to do so. There are motives to assent or dissent, as well as rational grounds; and those motives often bias and determine the judgement, either without reason, or against it: not that men can always believe what they will, but inclination frequently has a great hand in their persuasions. Men can lean, and will lean to the side which they happen to favour, upon motives of education, habit, authority, or example; or of interest, vanity, pride, passion, resentment, and the like: and when they so lean to a side, they can be partial in examining, rash in judging, or precipitate in resolving; so that the will may much influence belief. And as to unbelief, or disbelief, the influence is still more apparent: for, excepting such glaring facts as force assent, by obtruding themselves upon the senses, all other things almost may be slighted, and set aside. A man may refuse to attend to the clearest demonstration, or may industriously perplex it, and never let in the light which might convince him of its truth: and what he may do in that case, he may much more easily do in others, where the evidence is not so bright, or strong, or comes not up to perfect demonstration. These things considered,

^h Norris's Christian Prudence, p. 259.

considered, it must be allowed, that faith has at least a great dependence upon the will, if it be not itself an act of the will, as appears most probable. Diligence in looking out for evidence, patience and perseverance in attending to it, honesty in considering, comparing, ballancing, and then determining on the side of truth, these are all matters of choice, depending on the will; and therefore a right faith is a submission of our wills in that instance, to God. Seeing therefore that christian faith in general is virtue and duty, and therefore practical, it follows most evidently, that faith in the doctrine of the Trinity (supposing the doctrine true) is practical in its nature, is both moral and christian duty.

Now to sum up briefly what has been done in this chapter; it has been shewn, that the doctrine of the Trinity is of prime consideration for directing and determining our worship, and that it influences christian practice many ways, as forming proper dispositions, as raising and strengthening the gospel motives, and as enforcing the doctrines of satisfaction made by Christ, and of illumination and sanctification by the Holy Spirit; on all which accounts it appears to be strictly practical, and highly important: and it has been further intimated, that all duty is practical, and that faith is duty; and therefore this faith, as well as any other, and because of its important nature, more than many other.

other. I conclude therefore from the premises laid down in this chapter, that the doctrine of the Trinity is practical enough to be a fundamental article of Christianity.

I must own, there is a narrow kind of sense, and very improper, of the word practical, which I have observed in some writers, according to which the doctrine of the Trinity would not be a practical doctrine: for they mean by practical, what concerns practice between man and man, and nothing else. Such persons would not scruple to say, that worship itself is no practical matter: and it must be allowed it is not in that sense; it is not a duty of the second table, but of the first. It may deserve considering, whether that narrow sense of the word practical might not first give rise to the objection, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not practical but speculative; conceiving every thing to be speculative, excepting the common offices of life which we owe one towards another. Now indeed, according to such interpretation of the words practical and speculative, we should never affirm, that this doctrine is practical, or deny that it is speculative: for the duties depending upon it are branches of the first and great commandment, the love of God, and not of the second, viz. the love of our neighbour. But what would all this amount to, more than to a dispute about words or names? For we should still insist upon it, that our doctrine is practical, as much as any duties of the first table are prac-

tical; which suffices: and so at length in a just and proper sense of the word, the doctrine of the Trinity is practical enough to be a fundamental, if the love of God may be justly called a fundamental.

But when we speak of the doctrine, we mean it of the general doctrine itself, not of the minute circumstances, or appendages of it, which are either of a doubtful nature, or of slighter consideration. For, “ Though it is necessary, “ and essential to the christian faith, to acknow- “ ledge Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be “ one eternal God, yet there are a great many “ little subtleties started by over curious and “ busy heads, which are not fundamental doc- “ trines, and ought not to be thought so. God “ forbid that all the nice distinctions and defi- “ nitions of the schools, about essence, subsist- “ ence, personality, about eternal generation and “ procession, the difference between filiation and “ spiration, &c. should be reckoned among fun- “ damentals of our faith. For though we un- “ derstood nothing of these matters (as indeed “ we do not, and it had been happy the church “ had never heard of them) yet if we believe “ the divinity of each person, we believe enough “ to understand the doctrine of salvation. And “ though that fatal dispute between the Greek “ and Latin church, about the *filioque*, be of “ more importance than such scholastic subtle- “ ties, yet I cannot see that it concerns the “ foundation of our faith. For the Greek “ church

“ church did firmly believe the Holy Spirit to
 “ be true God, though they would not own
 “ that he proceeded from the Father and the
 “ Son, but from the Father onlyⁱ. And though
 “ we must acknowledge this to be a mistake,
 “ yet it is not a fundamental mistake: for the
 “ doctrine of salvation is secured by believing
 “ the Holy Spirit to be true God, without de-
 “ fining the manner of his procession^k.” I may
 just take notice by the way, that the doctrine of
 the Trinity hath been but little befriended by
 the schoolmen; rather hurt by them^l, though
 they did not design it. For, 1. By bringing
 up all the difficulties and perplexities they could
 themselves invent, or elsewhere meet with, they
 furnished out matter for the enemies of the faith
 to lay hold on; and it was from thence chiefly
 that the socinians afterwards borrowed their ma-
 terials to work with. 2. In the next place, by
 overlarding a plain doctrine with distinctions and
 subtleties in great abundance, they disguised and
 obscured it, that it was not easy to see thorough
 the mist they had raised. 3. Further by thus
 perplexing and diluting it, they really weakened
 it: for it is much easier to oppose it as it stands
 tricked up in that scholastic form, than as it
 stands in scripture and in the ancient Fathers.
 4. They

ⁱ See my Crit. Hist. of the Athanasian Creed, page 257, 2d edit.

^k Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, p. 273, 274. conf. Frid. Spanheim. F. tom. iii. p. 1212.

^l See Dr. Berriman's History of the Trin. Controversy, p. 378, &c. Frid. Spanh. *ibid.* p. 1225.

4. They brought a kind of scandal and disgrace upon the doctrine, as if it subsisted chiefly upon scholastic subtleties; an imputation which the adversaries to the christian faith have eagerly laid hold on, and often invidiously charged upon the trinitarians at large; though nothing can be more false or injurious. The truth is, the very distinguishing character of the trinitarians, in the days of the fathers, was their resting their cause wholly upon scripture and tradition; as the distinguishing character of the antitrinitarians, was their building mostly upon logical or metaphysical quirks and subtleties^m. What a string of those wanton levities have we in Aetius, preserved and answered by Epiphaniusⁿ, enough to fright any common reader, or to nauseate any man of good sense. The like we have again in Eunomius, answered by Basil, and by Gregor. Nyssen. The catholics scarce ever ran out into metaphysical notions, or expressions, excepting in two cases, and both in the way of self-defence. One was, when they were attacked with false metaphysics, they then laboured to answer them with true, lest the adversaries should triumph on that head, and seduce the populace. The other was, when the scriptural and customary expressions, which were used to convey a good sense, and could justly bear no other, were perverted to a bad one by equivocation and wile; the church

^m See Socrat. E. H. I. v. C. 10. Hieron. contr. Lucifer. tom. iv. par. 2. col. 296. Ed. Bened.

ⁿ Epiphani. Hæres. 76. p. 924, &c.

church could then have no so effectual security against false doctrines and false teachers creeping in among them, to corrupt the faith, and to beguile the unwary, as by adopting some new terms, and chosen expressions, for the supporting old truths°. This latter case is so naturally represented by a modern writer, that I shall take the freedom to borrow his words, for the sake of laying it in the most lively manner before the reader. “ Let me suppose an arian
 “ standing before you, and submitting himself
 “ to your examination, you ask him, whether
 “ he believes Christ to be God? He answers
 “ in the affirmative. You again enquire, what
 “ kind of God he supposes him to be? He replies, such a God as the bible makes him.
 “ This, you will complain, is collusive language;
 “ however, you request him to satisfy you, whether he believes the Son to be truly and properly God? To this he saith, *yes*, consistently
 “ enough with his own notion of God, though
 “ not with yours. But you farther ask, does he
 “ believe him to be likewise one with the Father?
 “ To this he replies, in the affirmative. You then
 “ press him with another question, How is he
 “ one with the Father, is he of the same essence
 “ with the Father? To this the arian answers,
 “ by asking you what you mean by essence?
 “ If you comply with his desire, and explain
 “ your

° See Dr. Berriman's History of the Trinitarian Controversy, p. 174—179.

“ your notion of the term, you are unavoidably drawn into metaphysical points^p.” Thus we see, metaphysical terms may be sometimes used by the orthodox side, when it is unavoidable; that is, when it is necessary to guard against equivocation and disguise, for the preserving the true faith, and for the excluding such ministers as would corrupt the gospel truths, and mislead the people committed to their care. But then it is wrong to blame those honest and conscientious guides for making use of the only remedy which is left them, and which nothing but the utmost necessity, brought upon them by the prevarication of others, would ever make them chuse. It is plain by this and the like instances, that they are not fond of metaphysics, not so much as of the terms: nor would there be any occasion for new words, or any use of them, if many had not learned to undermine the ancient faith, by affixing new and wrong ideas to the ancient forms. The very nature of the thing speaks itself: and the like methods have been used in most other forms and tests, as daily experience has shewn the necessity of it. Thus, to instance in the common case of oaths to a government, they are usually worded in as full and expressive terms as can be devised: and yet that sometimes is not thought sufficient, unless it be further added, without any equivocation, or mental reservation,

or

^p Reply to Mr. P. C.'s Letter, p. 11, 12.

or something of like kind. I ask my reader's pardon for digressing a while from the particular point I was upon: but these reflections came naturally in my way, and may perhaps be of use as to the main thing: and now I pass on to a new chapter.

C H A P. III.

Shewing, that the doctrine of the Trinity is sufficiently insisted upon in scripture to be deemed an article of prime importance.

OUR dispute must here be with the Dutch remonstrants. The most celebrated men amongst them, were Episcopius, and Limborch. I shall consider them both with care; that it may be seen by the things wherein they agree, what it is that both aim at, and by the points wherein they differ, how both of them were at a loss for any sound principle of reason to proceed upon: and the conclusion which perhaps may naturally result from all, will be this, that they had some motives or specious colours, for the persuasion which they jointly entertained, but no rational grounds for it.

1. I begin with the learned Episcopius, as the principal man. The sum of what his sentiments on this head amount to, is, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as to the main substance of it, is certain and clear, but yet not necessary

fary to be believed in order to salvation, nor important enough to justify an anathema against the impugnors of it, or for the rejecting their communion.

First, I say, he admits our main doctrine as true and certain, being plainly taught in scripture. This appears from the confession of the remonstrants, where the doctrine is taught in full and strong terms^q, as likewise from other places in Episcopius's works^r. Next, I observe, that in his discussion of the question of the perspicuity of scripture, against Bellarmin, he declares that the doctrine of the Trinity (such no doubt he must mean as the remonstrant's confession, and his own other writings contain) is clear, perspicuous and easy to be understood^s.

Notwithstanding

^q Cæterum distincte ac relate consideratur Deus sub Trinâ hypostasi, sive tribus personis.—Solutus Pater originis omnis expers—sed qui deitatem tamen suam, tum Filio unigenito,—tum etiam Spiritui sancto—ab æterno communicavit.—Filius ergo et Spiritus sanctus ejusdem cum patre deitatis, seu divinæ essentiæ ac naturæ, absolute ac communiter consideratæ, confortes sunt: prout, inter alia, maxime probatur ex divinis nominibus, seu titulis, item ex divinis proprietatibus, ex operationibus, quæ utrique in sacris literis apertè passim tribuuntur. Remonstrat. Confes. C. iii. apud Episcop. Op. Vol. p. 78.

^r Certum est tribus hisce personis divinitatem, sive divinas perfectiones in scripturâ tribui. Episcop. Instit. L. iv. p. 330.

Mirum non videri debere, si tribus hisce personis una eademque natura divina tribuatur, cum iis scriptura divinas istas perfectiones, quæ naturæ divinæ propriæ sunt, tam exerte attribuat. Episcop. ibid.

^s Atqui, ait, scriptura tradit summa mytheria. Quæ, inquam, illa? Primo, ait, de divinâ Trinitate. Atqui ea, prout scriptura tradit, nego obscura, nedum obscurissima esse. Addo, ea clara, perspicua et facilia intellectu esse, prout et quatenus ea in scriptura traduntur. Episcop. Instit. L. iv. C. 18. p. 269.

Notwithstanding all this, the same Episcopius was pleased to deny the necessity of believing the eternal generation of the Son (which with him appears to be the same with his eternal existence^t) and consequently, the necessity of believing the received doctrine of the Trinity. And he denied the necessity of so believing, as for several other reasons, so principally for this, because the scripture had neither directly, nor indirectly declared the necessity of the doctrine, though it had taught the truth of it^u.

But then again, I must observe of him, that he seems to me, not so properly to have denied the necessity of believing that doctrine (in our sense of necessity) as the necessity of pronouncing an anathema upon the impugnors, which he conceived must follow upon the other, and which he interpreted to such a rigid sense, as to mean sentencing the men directly to hell fire, or to everlasting damnation. This last particular, was what he chiefly, or solely hesitated upon when he came to explain; or he would be thought, at least, to mean no more; as appears

^t See Addenda, p. 496.

^u Hactenus ergo de veritate articuli hujus agimus, restat, ut videamus de ejus credendi necessitate.—Argumenta pro parte negante mihi longe videntur præponderare. 1. Quia nusquam in scripturâ id necessariam consequentiam ex eâ elicitur.

Episcop. Instit. L. iv. C. 34. p. 338.

Certum est iis, qui sic errant, in scripturis nusquam, nec diserte, neque in terminis, neque per manifestam consequentiam, Anathema dici. Quod autem in scripturis non est, etiamsi verissimum sit, necessarium tamen dogma non esse ipsi doctores in synopsi suâ adserunt. Episcop. Opp. Vol. ii. p. 259.

pears from his own words, in his answer to the Leyden divines^w; as also from his manner of wording the question in his Institutions^x, and elsewhere^y.

But that Episcopius did not deal fairly and uprightly in this matter, may be made appear from several considerations; as, 1. Because he aggravated the business of an anathema, beyond what he had reason for; which makes it look like pretence. 2. Because he was not consistent with

^w Author iste diserte et in terminis Socinianos inter eos collocat quibus salus abjudicanda non est. Id nusquam fecerunt Remonstrantes. At anathema illis non dicunt. Esto: sed nec negant anathema illis dicendum esse. Quid ergo? *ἑπὶ χροί*, neutrum dicunt.—Ne quid præcipitent, malunt relinquere tam severum ac grave iudicium Deo et tempori usque dum causas satis graves habebunt, ut in alteram partem cum certâ animi fiduciâ descendant.—Ex altera parte occurrere vident diram ac funestam anathematis, atque æternæ condemnationis sententiam: a quâ tantopere se abhorrere profitentur, ut eam nisi plenissimè persuasi ferre non audeant adeoque ferre illicitum sibi credant. Episcop. Respons. ad specim. calumn. p. 295.

^x Utrum scilicet præcise ad salutem scitu et creditu necessarium sit, Jesum peculiari isto quem adstruximus modo Filium Dei esse, iisque qui id negant, aut in dubium vocant, ac proinde id confiteri non audent, anathema sit dicendum?

Episcop. Institut. L. iv. C. xxxiv. p. 338.

^y Stabat jam animo Remonstrantium hæc sententia; nulli doctrinæ, nulli homini anathema dicere, nisi cui Deus ipse anathema dicit, vel expressis verbis, vel sic, ut per consequentiam omni exceptione maiorem, et cuivis obviam, id Deum dicere colligi possit. Deum non reperiunt anathema dicere, &c.—Absit a Remonstrantibus, ut tam promptam habeant spongiam quâ ex albo vitæ æternæ infinitas animarum alioquin sanctissimarum myriadas expungant, ob ignorantiam earum rerum, quæ sufficiunt ad doctissimi cujusque industriam exercendam ut eas possint intelligere, aut si forte eas intelligant, adeo tenues ac subtiles sunt ut eas persuadere aliis pæne impossibile sit.

Apolog. pro Confess. Remonstrant. p. 136.

with himself, either in his doctrine or conduct. 3. Because he has laid down a very fallacious rule for judging of necessities. 4. Because he has done the like in other instances also, and with as little reason, only to afford shelter for the Socinians.

1. I say, first, he has aggravated the matter of an anathema, beyond what he had reason for. When St. Paul delivered over to Satan, the design of it was kind and salutary, that *The Spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*². If men must not have warning given them of their evil ways, all friendly reproof is at an end; and it will be unlawful to tell them, however just or necessary the occasion be, that they are in a dangerous state, and upon the verge of destruction. The declaring such a case publicly, if it be right and true, is an eminent act of charity both to them, and to the world.

But further; every anathema upon the doctrine, is not an anathema, in Episcopius's sense, upon the persons teaching it³. The doctrine may be censured as pernicious and detestable, and yet the patrons of it believed to be in a salvable state, on account of invincible ignorance, or prejudices, or some unhappy warmth of temper,

or

² 1 Cor. v. 5.

³ Distinguendum judicium de hominibus, a judicio de rebus ipsis. De hominibus, præstat judicium cohibere, eosque Dei judicio relinquere, saltem nisi apertissimæ judicandi rationes adsint: de rebus ipsis, dogmatibus nempe, cultibus, regimine, ex Dei verbo judicare licet.

Alphons. Turretin de Articulis Fundament. p. 39.

or enthusiastic disorder of mind. It is no certain consequence, that we must therefore condemn the men to hell-fire, or presume to erase them in our opinion out of the book of life, only because we pronounce their doctrines false, or wicked, or subversive of the gospel^b.

Farther, merely renouncing, or refusing communion with some persons, may sometimes not amount to any judicial censure at all, but may be only taking due care of our own salvation, and conscientiously providing that we be not found partakers in other men's sins.

These things considered, it is plain that Episcopius's so tragical exclamations against denouncing an anathema upon the socinian doctrines, or against renouncing communion with the men, were carried too far, and aggravated beyond reason. He might have condemned their doctrines as pernicious or dangerous; and he might have declared the doctrine of the Trinity highly important, or generally necessary to salvation, without passing any such terrible sentence upon particular men: which yet if he had, might reasonably have been construed as no more than a friendly warning, and a declaration of his sense.

2. I

^b *Adest quippe, ut in vitiis, atque peccatis, ita ut in ignorantia atque erroribus, duplex remedium: alterum ex parte nostra, nimirum Pœnitentia, seu generalis seu particularis; alterum a parte Dei, puta ejus misericordia; quorum ope ut peccatis gravissimis, ita et gravissimis erroribus veniæ locum dari posse, a nemine negari potest. Alphons. Turretin. de Articulis Fundamental. p. 5.*

2. I observe farther, that he was not very consistent with himself, either in his doctrine, or his conduct, so far as concerns our present article. It appears from the public confession of himself and friends, and from what I have cited besides, that he held the doctrine of the Trinity, as commonly received, to be true, certain, and clear: and yet when he comes to justify himself in his refusing to condemn the socinians, or their doctrines, there he falls to talking of the obscurity of those articles which the socinians rejected, such as few besides the learned were able to understand, scarcely they, and fewer could believe^c. Now one would be glad to know of what kind of things he is there speaking. If he intends his reflexion upon the appendages to the main doctrine, or upon scholastic subtleties, (some true and some false) those were not the things, or however not the only things, which any one could blame the socinians for rejecting; so that this kind of excuse is intirely wide and foreign, and the making use of it is playing upon his readers; but if he means the main doctrine of the Trinity, for the rejecting whereof the socinians highly deserved censure, why does he here represent it as obscure, or scarce credible, when at other times, he admits it as a clear and a certain truth? I see no way of reconciling Episcopius to Episcopius, in things so contradictory and inconsistent.

As

^c See the last quotation from the Apology, &c.

As to his conduct, there was a farther inconsistency, in his condemning the calvinistical doctrines of absolute predestination, &c. as impiety, and blasphemy, and that publicly, and yet refusing to do the like by the socinian tenets, which certainly had no more claim to favour than the other. And how far was such a censure short of denouncing an anathema against the calvinists for holding them; though at the same time he professed, not to pronounce any anathema where God had not pronounced one? Where could he find any scripture anathema against absolute predestination (though I must own I dislike the doctrine, as well as he) or where could he find it said in terms, or by plain consequence, that it is necessary to salvation to believe it conditional, more than he might find for the belief of the doctrine of the Trinity also, if he pleased? His conduct therefore appears, in that instance, to have been inconsistent, and not of a piece with itself. It was objected to the remonstrants^d that they made blasphemers of the calvinists, but easily passed over the socinians without such censure: and all the excuse made for it, was, that the calvinistical doctrines

were

^d Secundum membrum est, quod Remonstrantes, cum in declaratione sententiam suam de prædestinatione et articulis ei annexis declarent, doctrinam Ecclesiarum Reformatarum non modo κατ' ἀντίθεσιν rejiciant, sed eam quoque impietatis ac blasphemiae condemnant; in hac tamen doctrinâ (Sc. Trinitatis) hæreticos nullos, aut hæretica nulla dogmata improbent, damnent, aut anathemate percutiant.

Vid. Apolog. pro Confess. Remonstr. p. 135.

were very notorious, and the calvinists had been very severe, cruel, and inhuman in their way of supporting them^e. But surely, the socinian blasphemies were as notorious as any could be: and how could the calvinistical doctrines (supposing them bad) be ever the worse, or amount to blasphemy or impiety ever the more, for the cruelty of their patrons and abettors? There is no just or consistent account to be given of this unequal conduct, except it be this; that blasphemies of adversaries (supposing them such) are real blasphemies and deserve an anathema; but blasphemies of friends, or of brethren in affliction, are innocent and deserve no anathema at all. When the remonstrants have said all they can, they will not be able to persuade the christian world, that those calvinistical doctrines (though I take them to be wrong) are worse than the socinian; or that a charge of horrid impiety,

^e Nec enim mirum est Remonstrantes doctrinam istam calvinisticam rejecisse passim in suâ declaratione, et quæ ex eâ consequuntur, impietates et blasphemias damnasse ex professo, a cæteris autem ex professo damnandis abstinuisse. Istud ut facerent, gravissimas causas habebant: nam sententia ista hæretica Calvini jam nota erat, vel pueris a furno et lacu redeuntibus: patroni ejus non damnaverant tantum contrariam veritatem, sed etiam intolerabilem ecclesiis suis judicaverant: professores exauthoraverant, &c.—Istam sententiam ut coloribus suis ad vivum depingerent (Remonstrantes) necessarium erat; idque eo magis quod eam, prout jacet, pestem credant, et venenum religionis omnis, cum quâ forte hæresis nulla alia comparari mereatur; et tamen nihilominus eam, ut fundamentum et basin religionis pene totius Christianæ statui et propugnari videant.

Apolog. pro Confes. p. 135, 136.

impiety, blasphemy, pest, poison, and heresy, is justifiable in one case, and not in the other. So that upon the whole, it might be very easy to retort upon the remonstrants their own tragical exclamations against denouncing an anathema: for let them but have the direction of it, and they discover no aversion to it upon weighty occasions, as to them appear; and in doctrines which they judge to be of great importance, they could be very smart and severe in their censures.

3. But the most material thing of all, is to examine Episcopius's rule for determining necessities, which seems to be very fallacious. He would have a thing declared necessary in scripture, either expressly, or by plain consequence. Here I know not what he would call a plain consequence: otherwise indeed, the rule may be very just. I take it, if the truth of a doctrine be fully and plainly taught in scripture, and it appears from the nature and quality of the doctrine itself, that it is important, and that much depends upon it, that then scripture has by plain consequence declared the necessity of believing such doctrine, by declaring its truth. If the rule be thus interpreted, then by the same rule, the doctrine of the Trinity is important in a scripture view, and ought to be reckoned among the necessities. By Episcopius's own account of it (as before observed) it is true, it is certain, it is clear, as proved from scripture; and by many arguments recounted in the last chapter, it

it has been shewn that it influences our worship, and bears a considerable part in what concerns the christian life: therefore scripture in making known this doctrine, has by plain consequence taught us the necessity of believing it, and the danger of rejecting it. If men have the use of their rational faculties, and are able to argue and infer, they need not be expressly told that such a doctrine as that is, is important and weighty, and worth the contending for: let but scripture once ascertain its truth, and every man's common sense will supply the rest.

When St. Paul was minded to convince the Corinthians of the necessity of believing the resurrection of the dead, he thought it sufficient to shew the connexion which that doctrine had with Christianity itself; to intimate, that their other faith was vain without that, and all preaching vainⁱ; and that the denying that doctrine, was in effect, denying the whole christian religion. Therefore that doctrine was necessary in the highest degree, as common sense must conclude: the very nature of the doctrine, and its connexion with the whole frame and body of revealed religion declared it. The like I say of the doctrine of the Trinity; not that it is necessary in the same degree with the doctrine of the resurrection, but in proportion, while much depends upon it, though not so much as does upon

ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 14. 17.

upon the other. Indeed neither of them are so necessary but that natural religion might subsist without them, upon a belief of the immortality of the soul^k: but both are very highly necessary in a christian light, and in a scripture view, as both in their several ways and degrees support the fabric of Christianity, and the body of revealed religion. If a right knowledge of God, if dispositions suitable to the heavenly state we expect, if the regulation and specification of our worship, if the due and proper force of gospel motives, if just ideas of the œconomy of man's redemption and salvation, and of the doctrine of grace; if these and other the like momentous concerns hang upon the true notion of the ever blessed Trinity, can we after that, want any particular text or texts, to declare to us the necessity of our believing it? Not but that particular texts may be found which are explicit enough upon that head, as I
may

^k Some very learned men have been of opinion that the same persons who in that time denied the resurrection, denied also any future state; which they infer from some reasonings which St. Paul made use of against them, (*Vitringa. observ. sacr. L. iv. C. ix. p. 924. Buddeus, Eccl. Apostol. p. 299.*) But I much question whether they argue justly on that head, or whether St. Paul reasoned upon their hypothesis, or upon some other principles. It seems to me, that all St. Paul's reasonings in that chapter, may be accounted for upon this postulatam, that if there be no resurrection, the separate soul, being under the sentence and dominion of death, cannot emerge and rise up to life and happiness, but must inevitably perish under such state of punishment, having no deliverer. But I offer this only as a conjecture, appearing to me not improbable.

may shew hereafter: but in the mean while, I observe, that our cause does not need that additional strength, does not depend upon it.

Besides, I would remark by the way, that a distinction might be properly enough made between a necessity of believing a scripture doctrine, and a necessity of not denying, or not opposing it: for certainly, a man may be under a stricter obligation not to deny or oppose a scripture verity, than positively to believe it; and it is a greater sin, publicly to deny and oppose a sacred truth, than it is merely not to admit it. Yet the socinians, whom Episcopius was inclined to screen, did not only forbear giving assent to the doctrine, but they dissented, and publicly opposed it with all possible vigour, nay, and with more wiles and artifices, than became plain honest men. Now, I take it, that though an explicit knowledge or belief, of many inferior scripture truths is not ordinarily required, yet it may be required and strictly too, not to deny or oppose even them, supposing them plain; because, it is, in effect, denying the veracity of God, or the inspiration of scripture. I know of no dispensation there is for denying and opposing any one plain scripture truth, contriving artificial elusions for it, any more than there is for disobeying a plain precept, in like manner eluding it; nor how a partial faith, in such a case, is at all more justifiable than a partial obedience: for indeed disbelief is disobedience, as I observed above. But the observation is much stronger

stronger when we find that the truth denied and opposed is a very material truth, one that has much depending upon it, one that lies near the foundation. How Episcopus could own it to be a truth, and yet think it no crime, or none deserving a public censure, to deny and oppose it, is unaccountable. We do not want to have it said in scripture, that it was necessary in particular, explicitly to know and believe it: but certainly if it be a truth revealed by God, as he allows, and not of the slightest kind neither, it was necessary not to deny or oppose it, and the man would deserve the public censure of the church, that should presume so to do. Therefore the learned Episcopus has in this instance, imposed a false rule of judging upon us, and such as he himself did not allow of in other cases. For, how could he attempt to charge impiety, blasphemy, and the worst of heresies (as he pretends) upon the calvinists? was it by citing any scripture texts which declare the necessity of believing the distinguishing doctrines on this side? No, but he endeavoured to shew that the calvinian doctrine, remotely concluded in impiety, blasphemy, heresy; and that consideration he supposed sufficient to found his severe charge against the calvinists upon; though in points more perplexed and obscure, and less agreed in, among Christians ancient and modern, than the doctrine of the Trinity. So natural is it for men of the greatest pretended moderation to confine it chiefly to their own

own friends, or party, and to exclude their adversaries from the benefit of it. Faults of this kind will often happen on both sides, while men are men: and the foundation of all is, that men will not agree about necessities, while they agree that there ought to be unity so far, and no farther. Many reconcilers have thought of various expedients, and different degrees of latitude: the worst that could be invented is indifference to all religions; which is like giving up an inheritance, and consenting to starve, for the saving of trouble and contest about it. But I pass on.

4. A further fault I observed in the learned Episcopius, was, that he extended the same fallacious rule to other doctrines of moment, beside this of the Trinity, and, as it seems, in order to contrive a shelter for his favourite Socinians. He denied the necessity of believing the divine prescience, as to future contingents¹, though at the same time he admitted the truth of the doctrine, in consideration of the scripture prophecies^m. Indeed as to the question taken

¹ Superest ut inquiremus, an ad salutem æternam consequendam, scitu credituque necessarium sit Deo præscientiam talem competere, adeo ut qui Deo eam competere aut negat, aut affirmare non audet, salute æternâ propterea excidat? In genere, nos id ad salutem scitu credituque necessarium esse negamus. 1. Quia nullum necessitatis indicium, aut vestigium ejus in scripturâ reperire est, sive indicium illud dicatur esse clarus textus, sive consequentia per se evidens.—Qui contra affirmat, ei incumbit probatio.

Episcop. Instit. L. iv. C. 18. p. 302.

^m Episcop. ibid. C. 17. p. 299, &c.

taken in the precise terms as he has stated it, "whether it be strictly necessary to salvation to know and believe it," and "whether a man shall forfeit his salvation for not believing, or not knowing it;" I say, in this precise view, it is hard to know how to answer, since it seems to proceed upon a wrong supposition of a certain quantity of faith, or of explicit knowledge, as necessary to the salvation of every person; about which we can determine nothing. But put the question, whether the doctrine be not highly important, and richly worth contending for, or whether the impugners of it be not very much to blame, deserving public censure here, and punishment hereafter, for such pernicious doctrine, and then the answer is easy, and certain: it is a very important doctrine, and the denial of it, especially if open and obstinate, highly criminal. Episcopius himself allows, that it is necessary to salvation to believe and know that God foresees whatever he has determined to bring to pass; because God himself strongly insists upon it, as a mark of distinction, whereby he will be proved to be the true God, in opposition to all rival deities". But with submission, may there not be thousands of illiterate

ⁿ Quænam ista sint quæ de divinâ scientiâ, omnibus ac singulis scitu credituque sunt necessaria? Tenemur scire ac credere, Deum scire ea omnia quæ a divino aliquo decreto suo dependent.—Ratio est, quia hanc scientiæ perfectionem Deus sibi tanto cum zelo adtribuit, et adtribui vult, ut per eam, et propter eam, se discernat, discernique velit ab omnibus dæmonibus,

rate Christians, who have not the explicit knowledge of that matter, or may never consider it? Why then is this more necessary to salvation (in that strict sense of the phrase) than the other? In truth, neither of them are so, in that rigorous sense: but both are highly important, and I conceive, equally so; because one implies the other, and they stand or fall together. God must foreknow future contingents, if he forms decrees long before hand about them. If he decreed and foretold long before, that Judas should be permitted voluntarily to betray Christ; he must have foreseen likewise that Judas would voluntarily do it, and how he would do it. There is no accounting for numerous prophecies, without the supposition of God's foreknowing future contingents; and since God makes this the distinguishing character of the true God; it is in effect disowning the truth of scripture, and denying the true God^o, to deny the divine prescience. How then can the

nibus, gentiumque diis atque idolis, tanquam verum unicumque Deum, qui solus idcirco summo honore, cultu, et obsequio dignus sit, uti videre ex Isa. xli. 23.

Episcop. Institut. L. iv. C. 18. p. 303.

° Mr. Lobb, in few words, well represents the case as follows: "From this notion of theirs, revealed religion receives
 " a wound: for if God doth not know future contingents,
 " how can he foretel them? And if he cannot foretel them, of
 " what use is the prophetic parts of the holy scriptures?
 " And if they must be rejected as uselefs, will not the deists
 " be abundantly gratified? or if it be yielded that God doth
 " not foreknow future contingents, it will necessarily follow,
 " that his knowledge is not infinite, and he cannot be God."
 Growth of Error, p. 188.

the focinians be excused in that particular, especially considering how presumptuous they are in it, going upon this proud principle, that they are able to search the Almighty to perfection, or that nothing is to be believed but what they can comprehend. Let but the modus of the divine knowledge be admitted as inscrutable to weak mortals, and then all difficulties are over with us at once: the infinite perfections of the divine mind ought in this case, to silence all objections. But if men will think too meanly of God, and too highly of themselves, and from thence proceed to teach such doctrines as undermine the scripture prophecies, and the divine perfections, and sap the foundations both of natural and revealed religion; can there be any just excuse made for such a wanton abuse of liberty, and such unwarrantable conduct in affairs of the last consequence to the salvation of mankind? But enough hath been said to shew, that Episcopius's famed rule for judging of necessities, is fallacious and wrong, and such as he himself did not proceed by in condemning the calvinists; though he was disposed to make use of it for favouring the focinians. The importance of any doctrine is not to be judged of merely from the declarations of scripture concerning its necessity, but from the nature and quality of the doctrine itself, and the relation it bears to the other parts of religion, and from the mischiefs likely to follow upon opposing it.

II. From

II. From Episcopius the chief leader, I pass on to his kinsman and follower, the learned Limborch; of whose principles in this cause I shall treat the more briefly, because they are the same in the main, with what have been mentioned under the preceding article. His acknowledgement of the truth of the common doctrine of the Trinity may be inferred from his admitting the common confession of the remonstrants, and from what he has asserted in his own works^p: wherein he sufficiently expresses the main doctrine (if we are to judge him an honest man) and proves it too, though not to advantage. It is true, he afterwards drops a suspicious expression^q, which requires a candid interpretation, to make it bear; and he meanly talks of Petavius's ingenuously confessing^r that some of the ante-nicene fathers disowned the co-eternity and co-equality of the Son. He did
not

^p Restat jam ut explicemus, quisnam ille sit Deus cui divinam hanc naturam competere sacræ literæ docent: Pater nimirum et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus. Limborch. Theol. Christ. L. ii. C. 17. p. 97. Tribus hisce tribuuntur divinæ perfectiones: unde concludimus Deitatem tribus hisce esse communem. (ibid. p. 98.) Ea de Jesu Christo Filio Dei, enunciantur, ex quibus liquet ipsum per veram, attamen arcanam et ineffabilem generationem, Filium Dei extitisse—ante omnia sæcula, et per eam naturæ divinæ consortem fuisse. p. 99. Ex hisce colligimus, essentiam divinam et Filio et Spiritui Sancto esse communem, p. 102.

^q Sed et est quædam supereminentia Patris respectu Filii, et Patris ac Filii respectu Spiritus Sancti, ratione dignitatis et potestatis: dignius siquidem est generare quam generari, spirare quam spirari, p. 102.

^r Sufficiat hic nobis ingenua Dionysii Petavii, doctores inter jesuitas celeberrimi ac doctissimi, confessio, &c. p. 102.

not understand the subtlety of the Jesuit, nor consider that probably it was not so much ingenuous confession of that great man, as a disingenuous misrepresentation of his to serve the interest of the modern church of Rome^s. His pretences have been abundantly confuted by Bishop Bull, and several other learned hands.

However, as I said, Limborch has sufficiently expressed the main doctrine, and asserted its truth: we are next to observe, what he thought of the necessity of believing it, or of the importance of it. He begins with declaring his scruples against asserting the necessity of believing the eternal filiation and divinity of God the Son^t, while he admits the truth. He conceives it not so necessary, as the owning Jesus to be the Messiah. Supposing it be not, yet it may be necessary notwithstanding. But if it can be proved that the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament, is there described under such characters as can belong only to God (as certainly it may) then it will be as necessary to believe him to be God, as to believe him to be the Messiah, because he cannot be the Messiah, unless

^s See my Second defence, preface p. 18. Bull, Proœm. Sect. 8. p. 6. Grab. Præfat. ad Bulli opp. Nelson's Life of Bull, p. 287.

^t Credimus nos, alibi doceri personam hanc esse filium Dei respectu naturæ divinæ ac filiationis æternæ — Quamdiu nobis ea scripturæ loca non occurrunt quibus naturæ divinæ cum humanâ unio perinde fidei salutaris objectum necessarium statuitur atque officium Christi de Jesu credendum est, nos, licet veritatem illam amplectamur, eam tamen ut creditu ad salutem necessariam definire non audemus. Limborch, L. v. C. 9. p. 413.

less he be also God^a. However, as I before said, admitting that one of these doctrines is more necessary or more important than the other, (though they are in just consequence inseparable) yet both may be fundamentals, notwithstanding. He goes on to speak of the obscurity of the doctrine, which is abusing it; because though the thing is mysterious, and the manner obscure, yet the main doctrine is as clear as can be desired, as clear as any doctrines concerning the divine nature, or attributes; clear in the general, clear so far as we are bound to believe. See above. He was aware of this answer; and therefore he endeavours next to evade the force of it. He owns the plea, with respect to some other fundamental doctrines, that the main substance of them may be clear, while the circumstances only are obscure: and he instances in that of the resurrection of the dead, which he says is clear, and necessary to be believed; but whether the bodies will be numerically the same, he thinks is not clear, nor a necessary article of faith. This is a point which I need not here debate; we may admit the instance for argument sake, and now let us apply it, and see how far the same reasoning will bear. We receive the doctrine of the resurrection, considered in a general undeterminate view, we define not the precise manner; and we admit the eternal divinity of God the Son, and the union
of

^a Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. Cathol. C. vii. sect. 5. and second Letter to Mr. Nation, by P. C. p. 9.

of all three in one godhead, not defining the manner of the union or distinction. So far the cases appear parallel: only indeed, the resurrection is a matter that falls under imagination, the other belongs only to pure intellect. But now comes on the stress of the question: he asserts, that the obscurity lies not in the circumstances of the doctrine of the Trinity, but in the very substance of it. That we deny; and Episcopius himself denied it, (unless he greatly prevaricated) as observed above. And how will the assertion be proved? The professor attempts it, by throwing our main doctrine into scholastic terms^b, that so it may instantly carry the face of obscurity in the very words. This is not dealing fairly with us: he does not chuse to express it so himself in other places, where he admits the verity of the doctrine, and where he declares his own faith; neither did Episcopius, or the common confession of the remonstrants so express it. Why then must they chuse one way of expression, for declaring the truth of the doctrine, and another for rejecting the necessity of it, except it be to serve a turn? The learned professor, instead of saying one Jehovah, or one God, or one godhead, here chuses the phrase

^b Alia vero est ratio eorum dogmatum quæ non in circumstantiis quibusdam, sed in seipsis suâque substantiâ, obscuritatem involvunt: quale est dogma de SS. Trinitate, quod tres distinctæ personæ, una generans, altera genita, tertia spirata sint unica numero essentia.—Quod statim primo suo conceptu varias involvit difficultates quæ a dogmate ipso separari nullatenus possint. Limborch, L. v. C. 9. p. 414.

phrase of one numerical essence: which is a late scholastic phrase, and faulty more ways than one. First, because the terms themselves are technical terms, and no way necessary to the christian faith: and next, because they carry an equivocation in them; and the proposition can neither be admitted, nor rejected, till it be carefully distinguished. Numerical essence in a fabellian sense, is heresy: in another sense, it is a truth darkly expressed. That the persons are one God, one Jehovah, is of the substance of the doctrine; but that they should be denominated one numerical essence, is not. For, first, it is a question, whether the divine unity ought to be brought under our distinctions about numerical and specific, contrived for expressing things finite: and if it should, it is still another question, in what precise sense of the word numerical (which is an equivocal term) the proposition can be allowed. Both these questions are circumstantial, furnishing matter for strife about words and names, not at all affecting the main thing^c: and the obscurity here complained of lies not in the doctrine itself, but in the unfair manner of expressing it, to give some colour for the complaint. If any person, instead of such a plain expression, as God's presence every where, should call it, the infinite expansion or diffusion of the divine essence, it would be unfair and wrong, in two views; first, as the

^c See my second Defence, Q. xxiii. p. 448, &c. alias, p. 453, &c. Farther vindication, p. 80. Brown's Animad. p. 21, 22.

the terms are scholastic, when plainer words would better serve the purposes of truth; and next, as it is running the reader into an obscure speculation about expansion what it means, and in what sense it may be admitted. Any doctrines whatever may thus be involved in obscurities, by clothing them in dark and equivocal terms, or by so contriving them as to bring in something of the *modus* into the main doctrine, when it ought to be intirely left out, either as unknown or as not material^d. I am sensible that the phrase of numerical essence has long obtained in the schools, and is capable of a good sense: but yet essence of essence (ever since that term came in) was always catholic doctrine, as God of God. And numerical essence, a more modern phrase, must be so explained as to agree with the other, and to exclude a fabellian sense. Otherwise it is no doctrine of ours, but an ancient heresy. But enough has been said to shew, that the learned Limborch has used a little too much art, in representing our doctrine as obscure, only by the clouds raised from an obscure expression. The doctrine itself is otherwise clear enough,
as

^d Sæpe res ipsa fundamentalis esse potest, *modus* vero rei, et circumstantiæ minime fundamentales. Etenim cum res ipsa tantum in genere revelata est, et tanquam necessaria a Deo imposita, tunc certe res ipsa tantum pro fundamento habenda est, non vero *modus* et circumstantiæ quæ pari evidentiâ, aut cum simili necessitatis caractere revelata non sunt. Et re verâ, paucissimæ sunt res, præsertim in divinis, quarum *modus* et circumstantias perfectè noscamus. Alphons. Turret. de fundament. p. 20.

as I have before manifested at large: and every plain christian will understand as clearly what he means when he says, the three divine persons are one God, as when he says, there will be a resurrection of the dead^e. Both the expressions are large and indefinite, wrapped up in generals; not descending to the minute circumstances belonging to this and that, but abstracting from them, and leaving them undetermined.

I meet with nothing more in Limborch deserving any particular answer. He has indeed some additional considerations in the same place, but such as amount only to mere assertions without proofs, viz. That it is sufficient to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and that our faith respects the office, not the person, that it is enough to consider him as mediator, and the like: all precarious assertions, taking for granted the matter in question; not to mention that the ancient and true notion of Christ as mediator, implies his divinity, and supposes him to be both truly God and truly man^f. Strange that a person of his great abilities could persuade himself, that the believing in Christ as to his several offices of prophet, priest and king, should be necessary^g, and yet that believing in him as a divine prophet, a divine priest, and a divine king

^e L. v. C. 9. p. 414.

^f See my second Defence, Q. xvi. p. 375. alias 380.

^g Cum itaque objectum Fidei Christianæ propriè respiciat munera Christi, eorum fides ac professio etiam necessaria est, Limb. L. v. C. 9. p. 415.

king (though the fact be true that he is so) should be of little or no significancy. One might as easily believe, that the soul is of no consideration to the body, as that our Lord's divinity, which runs through all his offices, and must enliven and invigorate every part, should be of no consideration, or slight, to a christian's faith in these offices. But this great man, as well as his greater predecessor, had his prejudices; and both of them had imbibed a very false notion of the ancient churches, as if they had not constantly insisted upon the necessity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, or had not condemned the contrary opinions as heretical. That was Episcopius's firm persuasion, and he insisted much upon it^b, having taken up the opinion too hastily from misrepresentations made of the fathers, by some moderns, not being himself acquainted, to any degree of perfection, with that kind of learningⁱ. And the like may be justly suspected of Limborch also, who trusted to Petavius in that matter, as I have already intimated. Had their surmise in that particular been just, I could not so much have blamed them for the rest. For to make any thing necessary at this time of day, which anciently was not so, or to conceive that the most pure and primitive churches failed in necessities, is too bold and shocking a thought for

^b Episcop. Inst. L. iv. C. 34. p. 339, 340. Respons. ad Specim. Calumn. p. 295.

ⁱ Vid. Bull. Præmonit. ad Lector. de necessitat. credend.

for any candid considerate man to entertain. But both Episcopius and his disciple were much deceived in that affair, as hath been abundantly shewn by Bishop Bull; and as I shall endeavour also to make plain to the English reader before I have done. And then it will the more easily be admitted, that the necessity of the doctrine is sufficiently inculcated in scripture, when it appears that the ancient churches collected such necessity from the same scripture.

I have not yet mentioned any particular texts declaring such necessity, nor do I think it needful, because the truth of such a doctrine infers its necessity to as many as the doctrine is revealed to. But yet I may observe, that the institution of baptism in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, carries with it a very sensible and affecting argument of the importance of the doctrine. It is indeed, when considered in all its views, a strong proof of the truth of the doctrine, as might be shewn at large, and often has been^k: but supposing the truth proved sufficiently from other texts, then there cannot be a more convincing argument of the importance of it than this; that our blessed Lord himself has recommended

^k See my Sermons at St. Paul's, Sermon. viii. p. 288, &c.

Bishop Stillingfleet's Vindication of the Trinity, p. 177, &c. 299, &c. Frid. Spanheim. F. Tom. iii. p. 1210.

Vitringa Observat. Sacra. Tom. ii. C. 22. p. 813—826.

Dr. Trapp's Lecture Sermon. p. 100—104.

Mr. Abraham Taylor's true Scrip. Doct. p. 91, &c.

To which may be added, Basil de Spiritu Sancto, C. 9. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 27.

commended it as the prime and leading doctrine, without the explicit mention whereof a man cannot be made a christian; that he has conveyed it to us in that solemn form, that most distinguished manner to every disciple of Christ, as the first thing proper for him to be acquainted with, deserving and requiring his most early thoughts and care, and also his constant and tenderest devotion ever after. On this foundation was the church itself erected, and stands to this day. What stronger, or more effectual method could have been devised to proclaim the necessity and high importance of this great article? A consideration which may receive yet further light and strength, by looking into antiquity, and there observing what a stress was laid upon the interrogatories in baptism, and how this article made up the principal part, if not the whole of the first creeds, and what particular care was taken to instruct the candidates in this important doctrine previously to baptism. But what relates to antiquity, will more properly come in under a distinct chapter designed for that purpose. I forbear likewise to insist upon another scripture argument of great force, which St. John's writings afford me; because that also may more conveniently be reserved for another place in these papers.

I have now run through the three several heads of debate, which I undertook; shewing in so many distinct chapters, that the received doctrine of the Trinity is both clear and practical,

tical, and sufficiently inculcated in scripture to be esteemed an article of high importance, an essential of Christianity, a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, diffusing itself through the whole of our religion, and being, as it were, the very life and spirit of it. It remains now to be enquired, how we ought to behave towards those who openly reject, or impugn it, or to take part with them that do.

C H A P. IV.

Shewing, that communion ought not to be held with men, that openly reject the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and persist in so doing.

THIS may be argued two ways, First, from express scripture texts; and next, from the very nature and reason of the thing considered upon scripture principles.

1. I begin with scripture texts. St. Paul's instruction to the Romans, in such cases is: *Mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*¹. The offenders

¹ Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

offenders here pointed at, were most probably^m the judaizing false teachers, those that preached up circumcision, and the observance of the law as necessary to salvation; a doctrine subversive of the grace of the gospel, as observed above. The apostle therefore exhorts his christian converts to mark them, that is, to beware of them, in order to avoid them, and to preserve themselves from the infection of their pernicious doctrine. And as he wrote by the Spirit of God, and had the gift of discerning the spirits of men, he could tell his converts with a certain and well grounded assurance the insides of the men; that they were men of carnal minds, and profligate consciences, using fair and plausible speeches to beguile others, for their own humour, or pleasure, or interest, or vanity. Such indeed is the general character of heresiarchs of all kinds: but yet without very clear and sufficient grounds appearing in overt acts, men ought not to take upon them the liberty of an apostle, in pronouncing upon the inward motives which heretics are led by: it is sufficient to pass sentence upon the quality of the doctrine, and to condemn it as subversive of the gospel (if it really be so) and to renounce communion with its open favourers and abettors. So much at least is manifestly implied in the advice given to avoid them, or turn from them. Receive them

^m See Grotius and Whitby, and Wolfius upon the place: and Vitringa *Observat. Sacr. Lib. iv. C. 9.* Buddei *Eccles. Apostol.* p. 121.

them not as ministers of Christ, nor own them as brethren: for they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ; but their fair speeches and false colourings are fitted to deceive unwary souls. Therefore avoid them, shun them, discountenance them, and that openly: for so they which are approved, will be made manifestⁿ, and not otherwise.

The same apostle pointing to the same heretics elsewhere, says, *There be some that trouble you, and would pervert [subvert] the gospel of Christ: but though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that you have received, let him be accursed*^o. How strongly here does the apostle guard against admitting new doctrines, (subversive of the old) through a common weakness incident to mankind, having men's persons in admiration, on account of their parts or learning, or their appearing goodness, sanctity, sobriety. Though *we or an angel from heaven* should presume to do any such wicked thing, *let him be accursed*; words very expressive and poignant, in order to correct the weakness before mentioned; and another also near akin to it, the natural fondness many have for novelties. And I may further observe, that in such cases we have no concern at all with the virtues

ⁿ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

^o Gal. i. 8, 9.

virtues or good qualities of false teachers, be they ever so real or great: if they corrupt the faith in any gross instance, that is reason sufficient for refusing communion with them, though they were otherwise bright as angels. A consideration worth the noting, for the obviating some popular pretences on this head. I need not here enter into the dispute, whether the words 'Ἀνάθεμα ἔστω, amount to a solemn curse, or are only a form of excommunication^p. If we take it in the first and most rigorous sense, it seems proper only to an apostle, or prophet, thus solemnly to curse or bless in the name of the Lord. But as the christian church afterwards^q often used the same form in their excommunications, the milder sense appears most probable. However that be, this solemn sentence of the apostle amounts at least to a strict injunction or warning to all christians, that they should not communicate with persons who corrupt the faith, (either by adding to it, or taking from it) in any gross manner, such as might be justly interpreted a subversion of the gospel of Christ. Such attempts are to be held in the utmost abhorrence, and the authors of them shunned as seducers and false apostles. It cannot well be supposed, that less than this is implied in the words of the apostle.

He

^p See Buddeus Eccles. Apost. p. 808, 809. Bafnag. Annal. Tom. ii. p. 477.

^q See Suicer. Thesaurus in voc. ἀνάθεμα.

Bingham's Antiq. of the Christian Church, Lib. xvi. C. 2, 8, 16, 17.

He goes on to say, speaking of the same persons in the same epistle, *He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be*^r. *I would they were even cut off that trouble you*^s. Which last words, I understand, with many judicious interpreters, of excommunication; and it is confirmed by what is said in the same place, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*^t; intimating the reason why the apostle wished to have those false teachers cut off from the communion of christians, viz. to prevent the contagion spreading farther. I am aware, that some very learned men^u dislike the interpretation I have mentioned, but upon a very slender reason, as to me appears. They think the apostle would not have wished for it only, but would have commanded it in virtue of his apostolical authority. It is true, he might have done it: but who knows for how many, or for what prudential reasons, he might forbear for a time, and be content at that juncture, only to throw out a wish, in order to prepare the Galatians for it, and to incline them by slow and gentle methods, to concur the more readily with it, when it should be absolutely necessary? It is not to be presumed, that excommunication, or a formal renouncing of communion, is a thing to be precipitated at all adventures, or that there
may

^r Gal. v. 10.^s Gal. v. 12.^t Gal. v. 9. compare 1 Cor. v. 6, 7.^u Elfner in loc. p. 196. Buddeus Eccles. Apostol. p. 808. Wolfius Curæ philolog. et Crit. Vol. ii. p. 772.

may not often be good reasons for delay, that so an affair of the highest consequence may be conducted with the utmost prudence. No doubt but that besides the milchievous nature of the heresy itself, several other circumstances of time, place and persons, ough to have their weight in consultations relating to church discipline upon offenders. But I pass on.

St. Paul gives advice to Timothy, in the words here following, *These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, &c.—from such withdraw thyself^w*. Perhaps the rendering and the sense would run better thus: **If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, if he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doating about questions, &c. from such withdraw thyself*. It is a disputable point, what particular sect, or set of false teachers, the apostle here refers to, whether judaizers or gnostics, or others distinct from both. But the one thing is plain, which is sufficient to our present purpose, that the apostle exhorts Timothy to withdraw from them, and that in order either to discountenance their false doctrines, or to preserve himself and others from receiving contagion by them. To the

^w 1 Tim. vi. 2—5.

* Vid. Vitrina Observat. Sacr. Tom. i. p. 220.

the same purpose is what the apostle again says to Timothy :

Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness; and their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying, that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some^y. The heads and patrons of the heresy here mentioned, the apostle had excommunicated before, delivering them over unto Satan, to stop their blaspheming^z. They appear to have been persons who believed the scriptures of the Old Testament, but misinterpreted them, allegorising away the doctrine of the resurrection, resolving it all into figure and metaphor^a. The delivering over unto Satan, seems to have been a form of excommunication, declaring the person reduced to the state of an heathen: and in the apostolical age, it was accompanied with supernatural or miraculous effects upon the bodies of the persons so delivered^b: though it may be supposed that such effects might last beyond the apostolic age, because other miraculous gifts certainly did so^c. I am well aware of the disputes which have been among persons of the best learning^d, about the

^y 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18.

^z 1 Tim. i. 20.

^a Vid. Vitringa Observ. sacr. Lib. iv. C. 9. p. 925.
Budeus Eccles. Apostol. p. 300.

^b 1 Cor. v. 5. see commentators. ^c See Addenda, p. 496.

^d A summary account of them may be seen in Wolfius's Curæ Philolog. et Crit. ad 1 Cor. v. 5. p. 367. or in Bingham's Eccles. Antiq. B. xvi. C. ii. sect. 15.

the precise meaning of the phrase, whether it signified excommunication, or an appendage to it. I have chosen that interpretation which appears most probable^c. I must own, there is a notion which appears to run through the debates of several learned men on this head, and which I cannot well understand. They seem to take it for granted, that excommunication is a punishment of the soul. I easily conceive it to be a spiritual punishment, as not being a corporal one, and as inflicted by a spiritual, that is, ecclesiastical authority: but how it is properly a punishment of the soul, I apprehend not. It's design is salutary, and the effect also often salutary; so that it is rather medicinal than penal, with respect to the soul. But this by the way only: it would be too large a digression here, to consider that point in such a manner as it deserves to be considered.

I go on to other texts, and shall take one by the way, which though not precisely to the point I am upon, yet is not altogether foreign. *There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision; whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake.—Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith^f.* We may here observe the ardent zeal

^c See Bishop Potter's Church Government, p. 371, &c.

Dr. Rogers's Review of a Discourse of the Visible, &c.

P. 392.

^f Tit. i. 10, 11, 13.

zeal of the apostle against false teachers, who corrupted the faith, and how great a stress he lays upon being found in principles. But he does not give orders for excommunicating those deceivers directly, but to admonish them first, and that with some sharpness, in order to shame them, and silence them, and bring them back to the true faith. From all which one may collect these following considerations, which may be of some use to us: 1. That religion is not a personal thing, which every man may new model, or alter for himself, without rebuke from his fellow christians, or from the governors of the church. It is the joint patrimony of the whole community, and every man more or less is accountable to his neighbour for any waste made in it. It is the common concern, and every one in his station and degree, must give a helping hand to preserve it in its native purity. 2. That the teaching and propagating of false doctrines, may subvert whole houses, and do a great deal of mischief: so that truth is not always a gainer by unrestrained liberties of that kind. 3. That sharp rebukes are very proper in such cases, and are no breaches of charity, but the truest instances of brotherly affection and love. 4. That admonitions and increpations should first be tried, even in case of great corruption in doctrine, rather than come to extremities at once: a rule expressly taught us, in what I am next going to cite.

I ... *A man*

A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself^a. This text will deserve a more particular examination, containing much in it directly belonging to the point in hand. Wherefore I shall handle the several parts of it the more distinctly. 1. *A man that is an heretic*. Here the first question is, who, or what is an heretic? To which I answer in the general, not every one that mistakes in judgment, though in matters of great importance, in points fundamental, but he that openly espouses such fundamental error. That I take to be the true and full notion of an heretic, according to the scripture idea of it. Dr. Whitby adds to the definition, the espousing it out of disgust, pride, envy, or some worldly principle^b, and against his conscience^c. Indeed that may generally be the case, but that those several particulars are necessary to the definition of heretic, is not to be allowed him by any means, for the reasons here following.

1. By that rule there would be no certain knowing, in most cases, who is an heretic, or who not, since there is no looking into the heart: and how then could we at all observe the scripture rule of avoiding or rejecting heretics?

2. There

^a Tit. iii. 10, 11.

^b Whitby on Gal. v. 19.

^c Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

2. There is as much danger, or more, when a blind enthusiast, or any person of invincible ignorance or prejudice, espouses false doctrines, and corrupts the faith, as when evil-minded men do the same thing of envy, pride, &c. and against their own consciences: and what shall be done in such cases? The way certainly is, to censure the doctrine as heresy, and to do all that prudence and charity prescribe for the preventing such well meaning, but mad teachers, from seducing the flock of Christ. It is not possible for men accurately to distinguish one case from the other; and therefore one general rule must serve for both: God will distinguish at the last day. In the mean time, all proper care must be taken to guard against the threatening mischief. For the poison of the doctrine, by whomsoever spread, or upon whatsoever principle, is just the same; only, if it comes from a man otherwise honest, pious, sober, &c. it is likely to insinuate itself deeper, and spread the wider. I say then, heresy lies in espousing pernicious doctrines: that we can judge of, and by that rule, can understand how to proceed. The other way involves all in darkness, and leaves a matter of the greatest consequence to the utmost uncertainty. But let us examine what the learned author before-mentioned had to plead in behalf of his notion. The strength of all lies chiefly in the word *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, *self condemned*, here used by the apostle; as if no man could be an heretic

that is not self condemned, or does not go against his own judgment and conscience. But I observe, that the apostle directs Titus to admonish a heretic once and again. It is supposed, that Titus might know a heretic, viz. by his espousing some doctrine subversive of the gospel: for how could it be certainly known, whether the man believed himself, or taught contrary to his own judgment? If after being twice admonished for teaching such pernicious doctrine, he should still persist, then he was to be looked upon as *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, self condemned. It could no longer be pure ignorance or thoughtlessness, after two several warnings, but must now be looked upon as matter of his own choice or election^d, as mere wilfulness and obstinacy to persist in opposition to the truth. When I say against the truth, I suppose that to have been a clear case to the admonisher before the first admonition, otherwise there had not been room for admonition at all. Admonish *a man that is an heretic*; not a man that is really no heretic, which would be contumelious and injurious. And if he persists after two admonitions, then look upon him as *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, self condemned, and reject him. It is plain enough from the whole tenor of this passage, that *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, whatever it means, does not belong to the definition of an heretic as such, but to that of an admonished and still obstinate

^d Ideo et sibi damnatum dixit hæreticum, quia et in quo damnatur sibi elegit. Tertul. de Præscript. Hæret. Cap. 6.

obstinate heretic. He is supposed a heretic before, and therefore was to be admonished once, and, if need should be, again: and then, if he persisted, he was to be looked upon as desperate and incorrigible; and therefore to be rejected utterly^e. There is indeed something elliptical in the sentence: *Knowing that he that is such*; as much as to say, knowing that he who continues such after two admonitions, is now *without excuse*^f, and as it were, passes sentence upon himself, either as voluntarily cutting himself off from the church, by an open revolt^g, or as rendering himself incapable of the privileges and blessings that belong to it, by renouncing its faith; which, in a just construction, is judging, or declaring himself unworthy^h of the blessings

^e Quare autem post primam et secundam correptionem *de- vitandus* sit, reddit causas, dicens: quod *subversus est ejusmodi, et peccat quum sit a semetipso damnatus*. Qui enim semel bisque correptus, audito errore suo, non vult corrigi, errare existimat corrigentem: et e contrario se ad pugnas et jurgia verborum parans, eum vult lucrifacere a quo docetur. Hieron. in loc. Vol. iv. p. 439.

^f Ἀναπολόγητος. See Suicer. Thesaur. in ἀτοκατάκριτος.

^g Hic enim *reus sibi* erit, qui non ad Episcopo ejectus, sed sponte de ecclesiâ profugus, et hæreticâ præsumptione a *semetipso* damnatus. Cyp. Epist. LXIX. p. 182. edit. Ox.

Propterea verò a *semetipso* dicitur esse *damnatus*; quia fornicator, adulter, homicida, et cætera vitia per sacerdotes de ecclesiâ propelluntur: hæretici autem in semetipsos sententiam ferunt, suo arbitrio de ecclesiâ recedentes: quæ recessio, propriæ conscientiae videtur esse damnatio. Hieronym. in loc. p. 439. Compare Hammond upon the text.

^h See Acts xiii. 46. so Irenæus — est a *semetipso* damnatus, resistens et repugnans saluti suæ, quod faciunt omnes hæretici. Iren. adver. Hær. L. iii. C. i. p. 174. Massivet.

blessings tendered. I have been the longer in explaining this text; because the real meaning and purport of it has been frequently misunderstood, or misrepresented. Now I return to Dr. Whitby.

He pleads, "That the apostle saith not to Titus, do thou convince or inform him of his error, but do thou admonish him of his fault: which shews, that the crime lay not in his head or his mistaken judgment (for that can never be corrected by admonition, but only by instruction) but that it lay in the irregularity of his affections, and the perverseness of his will¹." But what if the fault lay in heart and head both, as indeed all faults do? *Omnis peccans ignorat*, is a true maxim. There is some error always in judgment, before there is an error in practice; for evil, as evil, cannot be chosen. The fault therefore of an heretic, really such, is, that some corrupt affection (I except the case of invincible infirmity) misleads him first to pass a rash precipitate judgment; and next to espouse that judgment openly. And lastly, (if he proceeds so far) to persist in it against all advices or admonitions to the contrary. The heart perverts the head; and both conspire in the same false judgment and conduct. The good Doctor pleads farther: "No man who acts according to his judgment, how erroneous soever it may be, is self damned in that action^k." Yes, if he made a
a rash

¹ Whitby on Tit. iii. 10. Comp. Dr. Stebbing, p. 184. fol,

^k Whitby, *ibid*.

a rash judgment, and might have known or done better, he is self condemned: for he condemns others who judge rashly and wrongly, when they might and ought to have judged better; and so of course he condemns himself, by the same sentence¹. There are two kinds of self condemnation, one direct and explicit, the other indirect, implicit, virtual, consequential. As to direct self condemnation, few fall into it: for men are so partial towards their own failings, that they seldom see their own false judgment, or wrong conduct, and as seldom condemn themselves for either. It is their fault that they do not: such self condemnation would be commendable, and a good step towards recovery. It is not such self condemnation that the apostle speaks of: there is too little of it every where; presumption and self applause are the foibles of mankind. And they will easily take care in most cases, not to be directly self condemned, though condemned by all the world besides. It is not self condemnation in this sense, that makes an ill man, or aggravates a fault, but the want of it^m. The other kind of self condemnation, which I call indirect, is what the apostle may point to as an aggravating circumstance of heresy, his persisting in it after two admonitions. The man justifies himself in opposition to truth and good counsel, does not condemn himself directly, when

¹ See Rom. ii. 1.

^m See Hammond upon the text.

when he ought to do it, and amend: but he condemns himself indirectly, as acting against the law of his mind, against that general law, by which he condemns others, and justly, whenever they allow themselves in wrong things, and might know better. This is his condemnation, that he approves in a particular instance through partiality what himself in the general condemns. All sinners, in this, are self-condemned; and so are heretics also among the rest. Indeed, all that do not make a proper use of their rational faculties, when they may and ought to do it, are thus self-condemned: and their own awakened consciences will rise up against them, at the last day, as men guilty of great prevarication and self-repugnancy, for allowing in themselves, what they otherwise disallow and condemn. *Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant,* will then be the sentence due to all, who having been twice admonished, for corrupting the faith, repented not of it, but persevered in their errors both of judgment and practice, when they might have known better.

I defined heresy not merely a mistake of judgment (though in fundamentals) but espousing such erroneous judgment, either teaching and disseminating it, or openly supporting and assisting those that do, siding with them in it. This I conceive to be the true scripture notion of heresyⁿ. Nevertheless, an erroneous judgment in

ⁿ 1 Cor. xi. 19. Gal. v. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 1.

in fundamentals, has more commonly passed under the name of heresy^a, and is undoubtedly a great fault, whatever name we call it by. It is running counter to all those texts, which recommend zeal and earnestness for the true faith: for how can a man consistently with himself, be zealous for what he either disbelieves, or assents not to? It is likewise running cross to all those texts which exhort to *sound faith*, or which command us to *hold fast what is good*, or forbid the being *tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*, and the like. Whether such fault shall be called heresy or no, is only disputing about a name: but that it is in itself (particular circumstances excepted) a great offence against God, cannot be doubted; and it naturally leads to worse.

2. Having largely treated of the nature and notion of heresy, and what properly denominates any man a heretic, I am next to say something of what is meant by rejecting such persons. After all prudent and proper means have been used to reclaim them, or silence them, and they still persist in their heresy, either in teaching, or otherwise espousing false and pernicious doctrines; then the rule of the apostle is to reject them, or cast them off, if they have not before cast off themselves. The text does not say, excommunicate them; for that would not be necessary, when they have excommunicated themselves: but it says, *shun* them, *avoid*

^a See Hammond's Paræn. C. v. p. 364. Vol. iv.

avoid them, *reject* them; which, in case they do not cast themselves out, implies and infers a command to exclude them: so that the text, by that general expression, seems to have provided for both the cases.

But I must here again take notice of Dr. Whitby's mistakes and false reasonings. He was sensible, that according to his loose definition of heresy, there would be no knowing, for the most part, who is guilty of it, or who ought to be condemned for it: he produces the objection himself, and afterwards endeavours lamely to answer it. "It is objected," says he, "that there be few who oppose the truth wittingly, and they are only known to God, not to the church; which therefore cannot admonish, avoid, or excommunicate them^b." An insuperable objection against his notion, shewing that it terminates in a flat contradiction to scripture, and to the plainest reason. Well, how does he reply to it? The sum of his answer is, "that Titus might have the discerning of spirits, a gift belonging to those times: and the church that was in the days of the apostles, could easily know, whether the doctrines which others taught in opposition to them, were indeed doctrines received from the apostles or not: if they were not, they who taught them must know, they received no such doctrine from them, and so must be
"self

^b Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

“ self condemned in teaching it as received from
“ them, or as the faith once delivered to the
“ faints.” Never was there a looser reply, in
so momentous a cause. For, 1. This amounts
to saying, that all the precepts about admonish-
ing, avoiding, or excommunicating of heretics,
and of consequence, all the other precepts about
preserving sound doctrine, or contending ear-
nestly for the faith, expired in a great mea-
sure as soon as the miraculous gifts, or
gift of discerning spirits ceased. The precepts
from that time forwards, became impracticable,
because no body now could know what was
heresy, or who heretics, since they could not
see into men’s hearts. Though heretics might
subvert whole houses (and now more than ever,
when there should be no apostle living to con-
troul them) and though their *words might eat*
as doth a canker; yet the church is left with-
out remedy: the pastors and guardians of it
must not presume to excommunicate, or avoid,
or admonish persons as heretics, unless they can
first prove them heretics or ill-designing men:
but if it be certain, that they are led by an
erroneous conscience, they must not be censured
at all, but treated as good men and fellow
christians. “ So that we are commanded to
“ avoid a heretic; but this heretic is such a
“ sort of a creature as no body can ever find
“ out, or distinguish from one he is to treat
“ as a brother. But suppose this heretic should
“ tell

“ tell us, that he did not believe what himself
 “ affirmed, then indeed he would be self con-
 “ demned, and we might know it. But he
 “ must be a fool of a heretic who would de-
 “ clare this, unless he intended to recant and
 “ renounce his errors: and whenever he did
 “ this, he would no longer be a heretic, no
 “ longer to be avoided: and therefore being
 “ self condemned in this sense, would be so far
 “ from a reason why we should avoid him, that
 “ it would be a reason why we should not avoid
 “ him, but treat him as a brother^d.” 2. From

the same principles it will follow, that the whole discipline of the church, after the time that the gift of discerning of spirits ceased, so far as concerned heretics, was rash and unwarrantable: which no wise man will presume to say or think.

3. It farther follows, that be heresies ever so rise, and the faith ever so much endangered, there is no remedy for it: we cannot know in these times, (though the scriptures are allowed to be clear and perfect) what the doctrines of the apostles were, or whether the doctrines which others teach in opposition to them, are indeed doctrines received from the apostles, or not: however, if we may know that, yet without knowing men's hearts too, all our zeal for the ancient faith is fruitless and vain.

Such are the absurdities which the learned doctor inevitably runs into, only for the sake of a false favourite notion he had unwarily imbibed.

^d Rogers's Review of the visible and invisible Church, P 499.

bibed. The truth of the whole matter is, we have nothing to do with the inward motives or views of heretics. The mischief lies in the false doctrines which they teach and propagate: and upon that account, and that only, they are to be admonished, avoided, censured, in order to prevent the subverting whole houses, and the like. Possibly such false teachers may intend well: of that God is judge. But the faith of Christ, and the salvation of souls, must not be sacrificed even to the known good intentions of any man, or men whatsoever; no, nor to the preaching even of an angel from heaven, were it a possible supposition.

But it may be objected; what, must innocent men suffer for the sake of any good? Is that justice or equity? I answer, that they are innocent in this case, through an erroneous conscience, and invincible ignorance, is more than man knows or can know: of that God is judge. But that corrupting the faith is not an innocent practice, (considered in itself) but a very ill thing, every one knows, or ought to know; and that is the rule for men to go by in judging, because they can go by no other; and it is in the main both a safe and certain rule. And if it may sometimes happen, that discerning and upright judges may condemn a man who is innocent in God's sight, (because of some unconquerable infirmity) while guilty in the eyes of man, this cannot be remedied. The good proceeding from such censures, vastly overbalances it.

it. And what if after all, spiritual censures (for of such only I am speaking) should happen to fall upon such a person, he may be in some measure hurt in his reputation by it, and that is all^e: and possibly hereupon his errors before invincible through ignorance, may be removed by wholesome instruction and admonitions, and so he is befriended in it, and may now come to have a covenant right to happiness, who before stood only in uncovenanted mercy. For though God will condemn no man for what he could not help; yet he has promised no man a reward who ever so ignorantly corrupts the faith of the gospel: but it is said of the unlearned and unstable, that when they wrest the scriptures, it is to their own destruction. I have dwelt the longer upon this argument, because it appears to me to be a very weighty affair, and not so well considered by many, as it ought to be. I now proceed in order to some other texts, relating to the avoiding heretics.

St. John's advice in that case, touched upon before, is, *If there come any one unto you, and bring not this doctrine, (the doctrine of Christ in a material article) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds*^f. The apostle here forbids a christian to salute^g a man, that perverts the gospel in such a certain article, being a fundamental one: what article he spoke of,

^e See Addenda, p. 497.

^g Χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε.

^f 2 John 10, 11.

of, I have intimated above. It is observed by interpreters, that denying a person the common forms of salutation, was the same with looking upon him as excommunicate^h. And so these words of the apostle carry in them the force of an excommunication, with respect to the heretics there pointed to, and the force of a prohibition, with respect to other christians, who are hereby forbidden to receive such heretics into their houses, or to pay them so much as common civilitiesⁱ. This precept of the apostle may be further illustrated by his own practice, recorded by Irenæus, who had the information at second hand from Polycarp a disciple of St. John's, that St. John once meeting with Cerinthus at the Bath, retired instantly without bathing; for fear, said he, lest the bath should fall, by reason of Cerinthus's being there, the enemy to truth^k. The like story is there also told of Polycarp himself, with regard to another such heretic, namely Marcion. And Irenæus's just reflection upon the whole, is very observable in these words: "So extremely cautious were the apostles and their followers, to have no communication, no, not so much as
" in

^h See Hammond and Whitby.

ⁱ See Addenda, p. 498.

^k Καὶ εἰσὶν οἱ ἀκηκόοτες αὐτοῦ, ὅτι Ἰωάννης, ὁτὲ κυρίως μαθητὴς ἐν τῇ Ἐφέσῳ πορευθεὶς λέσασθαι, καὶ ἰδὼν ἔσω Κήρινθον, ἐξήλατο τὸ βαλανίον, μὴ λησάμενος, ἀλλ' ἐπειπὼν. Φύγωμεν, μὴ καὶ τὸ βαλανίον συμπέσῃ, ἔδου ὄντος Κηρίνου τῷ τῆς ἀληθείας ἰχθὺς.

Irenæ. L. iii. C. 3. p. 177. Bened. alias, 204. Grab.

Conf. Euseb. Eccl. H. L. iii. C. 28. p. 123. Theodoret Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 3. p. 220.

“ in discourse with any man that adulterated the “ truth¹.” A conduct, which, as he remarks, was conformable to St. Paul’s rule, Tit. iii. 10. The reader will take notice by the way, that though Cerinthus and Marcion might be otherwise ill men, and might perhaps act upon bad motives, yet the stress of the thing lay not there; but it was their being enemies to truth, and their adulterating the truth, (in points fundamental) which made them so abhorred, and their company so detested by wise and holy men. No matter what their motives were, or their morals in other respects: they corrupted the faith of Christ, and in effect, subverted the gospel. That was enough to render them detestable in the eyes of all men who sincerely loved and valued sound faith.

The bishops of Pergamus and Thyatira are reproved by our Lord for suffering, that is, for not ejecting the Balaamites or Nicolaitans, who taught false doctrine, relating to the fundamentals of christian practice. They taught the lawfulness of fornication, and of eating things offered to idols. That was a heresy in doctrinals, immediately affecting the *agenda* of christianity, the moral commands of scripture; which they very probably misinterpreted and perverted, much after the same manner as others perverted such texts as contain the *credenda*, matters of faith strictly so called.

¹ Τοσαύτην οἱ Απόστολοι καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτῶν ἔσχον ἐυλαΐειαν, πρὸς τὸ μηδὲ μεχρὶ λόγου κοινωνεῖν τινὶ τῶν παραχαρασσόντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὡς καὶ παῦλος ἔφησεν· αἰρετικὸν ἀνθρώπον. κ. τ. λ. Iren. *ibid*.

called. There is not much difference in the main, between the two cases; excepting that one is more gross and scandalous, and shews itself in more sensible effects. There is the same presumptuous tampering with scripture, the same kind of artificial elusions, the like wire drawing of texts, in both cases: and there is likewise the same kind of unbelief or disbelief of God's sacred word, only in different articles, and the like opposition to gospel truths, only to different purposes. If any man through mere weakness of judgment should have imbibed the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, but resolving at the same time never to divulge it, nor practise upon it, I see not what harm a bare opinion, and owing only to unavoidable infirmity, would do him, while dormant, and without effect. But if any person, through the like insuperable weakness of judgment, should entertain low and degrading notions of his God and Saviour, though he should never divulge it, he would suffer some harm by it with respect to his religious services, which would be thereby rendered less perfect: for in that case, the ill effect so far, is inseparable from the false opinion; though I doubt not but all merciful allowances would be made for it. But as the criminal part in the former case, would lie chiefly in practising upon the persuasion, or in divulging it to the hurt of other persons, so in this latter also, the most criminal circumstance would be the espousing and publicly supporting such false persuasion

to the detriment of religion. For if he who shall break one of the *least moral commandments*, and shall *teach men so*, shall be called *least in the kingdom of heaven*, (Matt. v. 19.) it must be a very dangerous experiment for any man to presume to teach any thing contrary to the gospel of Christ in the main articles of faith, or doctrine, because, the christian life is nearly concerned in both, and the honour of God and religion are bound up with them. The pastors or guardians of the christian religion ought no more to suffer any notorious insults upon the great credenda of our most holy religion, than upon the agenda; since both rest upon the same foundation, have a close connexion with each other, and are, for the most part, likely to stand or fall together.

II. I have now proved from direct scripture texts that it is the duty of Christians to refuse communion with those who corrupt the faith of Christ in points fundamental, and persist in so doing, after proper cautions and admonitions given them. I am in the next place to enforce the doctrine yet farther by considerations drawn from the very nature and reason of the thing, upon scripture principles. Piety towards God, charity towards other men, and justice towards our own souls, all conspire to recommend and authorize such conduct.

I. I say, piety towards God requires such a conduct. For can it be thought, that when the high lord and governor of the universe
vouchsafes

vouchsafes to speak to us from heaven, and to reveal truths of importance, that good men ought patiently to bear the perverting of those sacred truths, or the adulterating of those heavenly instructions? Earthly governors would resent the putting false constructions upon their laws or edicts, or the wresting them to quite different purpose from what they were intended for, to deceive, and mislead their people: how much more shall the God of heaven resent any indignities of that kind? It is the cause of God and religion, to rescue the word of God from perverse glosses and comments, and to preserve it in its native purity and perfection. To admit those who corrupt and deprave its sense in any gross manner, to the common honours and privileges of fellow christians, would be the ready way to introduce all imaginable confusion in faith and worship, and to deface Christianity to such a degree, that common christians at least could not know how or where to find it. For example: had the Cerinthians, Ebionites, Marcionites, Valentinians, Manichees, and other sects, too numerous to mention, been all admitted as fellow Christians, Christianity must have been looked upon as the most uncertain, unconstant, inconsistent thing in the world: and both the religion itself, and the scriptures which contain it, would very probably have been lost before now, or have come down to us so mangled, adulterated, disguised, that no one could know what to depend upon as true and sincere,

either as to words, or sense. The discriminating of heretics from faithful Christians, and therewith preserving the unity of the church, and the purity of doctrine, has been a principal means of fixing the christian religion in its most material articles, and of supporting the honour of it, against all its enemies without, whether Jews, Pagans, or mere Infidels. So necessary was it to discountenance all attempts for subverting or perverting the truth as it was in Christ Jesus, and to separate the clean from the unclean, by rejecting heretics as unworthy of christian communion, or even of the name of Christians, except it were in a very large sense.

2. As piety towards God and reverence towards his sacred word required such conduct; so likewise did charity towards men: charity towards the offenders, and charity towards all mankind. It was a charitable office towards the corruptors of the faith of Christ, to reject and disown them, in order to make them *ashamed*^a, and to bring them to repentance, that so their souls *might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*^b. It is true, that it often failed of having this salutary effect, as the judgments of God also often fail, and where they do not cure, they irritate and harden, and render worse; which is no argument against the salutary nature of the remedy, but shows only the incurable disorder of the patient. Indeed, St. Paul
does

^a 2 Thess. iii. 14.

^b 1 Cor. v. 5.

does distinguish his coming *with the rod* of excommunication, from his coming in *love and in the spirit of meekness*^c: not as if such discipline were not an instance of love, or were not perfectly consistent with a spirit of meekness, but it was not love in every view, or in every sense of the word, like the love shewn towards the faithful in all the outward expressions of approbation and friendliness; for the case did not admit of it. It was love mingled with wholesome severity, the truer love for being so mingled, when the necessity of the case required it: wounds they were, but of a friend still, and in a case where the kindest of friends could not otherwise show themselves kinder than by so doing. Meekness it was not, under that precise formality, but consistent with all that could be called christian meekness: for to forbear sharpness and severity, in such a case, is not meekness, but tameness, and Laodicean lukewarmness. So that the exercise of proper discipline, in such instances, is in reality fervent love and charity towards the offenders themselves, in a spiritual view, but expressing itself in the harsher way, the only way left for it towards men in their circumstances. Palliating medicines would be cruel and barbarous applications, when corrosives are the only means left to recover the patient, and to effect the cure^d. Upon the whole therefore,

^c 1 Cor. iv. 21.

^d The objections made to the method, as not proper, are abundantly answered by a very learned prelate. Potter on church-government, p. 399, &c.

fore, charity towards the offenders themselves, requires such a conduct as I have been mentioning.

There can be less appearance for any question, whether it be not also charity towards all men besides. It is charity towards the ignorant, as carrying instruction along with it; charity towards the unwary, as giving them warning to stand off from infection; charity towards the confirmed Christians, as encouraging them still more, and preserving them from insults; charity towards the whole church, as supporting both their unity and purity; charity towards all mankind, towards them that are without, as it is recommending pure religion to them, in the most advantageous light obviating their most plausible calumnies, and giving them less occasion to blaspheme.

3. I observe, in the third place, that justice to our own souls requires, that we use all prudent and proper endeavours to discountenance heresies by refusing communion with their open favourers and abettors. For otherwise, as St. John speaks, we become *partakers of their evil doings*.—To own them as fellow Christians, is to take their guilt upon ourselves, or greater. I say, greater, because supposing them so far innocent as honestly to follow their own judgment, yet while we are of a contrary judgment, it cannot but be guilty practice and conduct in us, and very great too, to smother our sentiments, or not to bear our testimony in such

such a way as Christ has appointed, against all notorious corruptions either of faith, or worship, or doctrine. It appears then sufficiently both from scripture directly, and from the very nature and reason of the thing, that it is our bounden duty to refuse communion with those that persist in opposing the fundamental articles of our most holy religion. I am aware that several objections have been made, and will be made to what Christ has ordered, and the church has all along practised as concerning our conduct in this article: for what is there so just, so rational, or so commendable, that may not be objected to? however in order to satisfy reasonable men at least, I design a distinct chapter for the further clearing up the question in hand.

CHAP. V.

Objections removed, and some vulgar mistakes rectified.

HAVING laid down our principles, and the grounds upon which we go, our next concern is to remove or obviate whatever threatens to overturn them, or to lessen their force, lest any weak objections on one side, left un-

answered, may prevail more with some persons than the strongest arguments on the other. I proceed then to the business.

I. It may have been sometimes invidiously suggested, that the insisting so strongly upon the necessity of believing, or however of not opposing this doctrine, is carrying matters to an immoderate height, and tends to provoke others to run into a contrary extreme out of a kind of indignation, and excessive renitence. The plea is smooth and specious, and appears to carry a fair shew of lenity and moderation in it, which are virtues much to be admired; but in reality it contains little, as here applied, more than an artful abuse, and such as is frequently played with in other the like cases. For the purpose: if any person is disposed to undermine the inspiration of sacred writ, he begins usually with complaints of the stiffness and dogmaticalness of common divines, which prejudice men of freer thoughts, as is pretended, against scripture itself, and almost force them into another extreme. So again, if any man has a mind to relax the strictness of the gospel rule, and to bring it down to his taste, he falls to declaiming against the excessive rigour of religionists, which frighten many sober persons, as is said, from embracing religion. Complaints of that kind may sometimes be just, but they are oftner mere artifice. It will be proper to examine, in the first place, what truth there is in the suggestions brought
about

about our running into extremes. Without all question, extremes are carefully to be avoided in every thing. Extreme cold may be as bad as extreme heat: and extreme lenity is a fault, as much as extreme severity. But the thing to be proved is, that the insisting upon the doctrine of the Trinity, as an essential article, is an extreme, or that it is not in reality the true and golden mean between rigour on one hand, and lukewarmness on the other. It may be true, that the insisting upon this doctrine, may have that accidental effect, to prejudice weak minds the more against it, or against religion itself. In like manner, the insisting upon the doctrine of the cross, the duty of self denial, and the necessity of universal righteousness, may have prejudiced many against Christianity, and yet daily do so. But still if the doctrine be both true, and important, it must be taught and inculcated: and the question in such cases is not, whether many may not be offended or scandalized at any doctrine, but whether the doctrine be such as ought to be insisted upon. For as a very judicious and learned prelate^e has appositely observed, “ St. Paul has plainly
“ taught us, how we ought to conduct our-
“ selves in such cases. He knew very well,
“ that Jew and Gentile took great offence at
“ the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, and he
“ could not but see that Christianity would
“ be

^e Bishop of London. In his Charge of May 28, 1730.
p. 28.

“ be more favourably entertained by both, if
 “ that offence were removed, and the gospel
 “ reduced to a scheme of mere morality, rati-
 “ fied by a person sent from God, and enforced
 “ by stronger assurances of rewards and punish-
 “ ments than had ever been given before. But,
 “ notwithstanding all this, *we* (says he) *preach*
 “ *Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block,*
 “ *and unto the Greeks foolishness*^f.” The reason is
 plain: for, the ministers of Christ are under spe-
 cial direction, and must not dare to prevaricate
 in their sacred employment. They must never
 presume to betray the truth of the gospel with
 any view to prevent offence: for, such offence
 is taken, not given, and is therefore of no
 moment. They only are to bear the blame,
 who are causelessly offended at what they ought
 to receive with the profoundest respect and vene-
 ration.

I may here also take notice, that when some
 persons of more warmth than wisdom, have
 gone upon what they call healing measures, in
 order to reconcile many (as they supposed) to
 Christianity shortened and curtailed in its prime
 articles, they have been for the most part miser-
 ably disappointed. Their unwarrantable conces-
 sions, instead of making more Christians (half
 Christians, I should say) have only made more
 infidels. And it was natural to think, that such
 would the result be. For when once the advo-
 cates

^f 1 Cor. i, 23.

cates for religion begin to recede beyond what they have warrant for, they give very great advantage to the enemy, who may then modestly expect to draw them on farther, upon the same motive, or principle, which had before carried them too far. For, if they yield to importunity, rather than to reason in one case, why not in another? or if the first step taken out of the way, could appear rational, why not a second, and a third, and so on, till there be no end of wandering? It is frequently the fate of those over complying gentlemen, that while they stoop too low in hopes to fetch others up, they are themselves dragged down, and can never recover it. They are insensibly carried over to the party towards which they lean; and instead of preserving a balance (which they lost in the first decline) they are at length found to run in with the other extreme. The episcopian neutrality seldom stays long, before it passes over into arianism or socinianism; and these again easily degenerate into deism and atheism. It is much to be questioned, whether mysteries, after all, are really the things which are most apt to offend the fashionable world: the purity of the gospel precepts is the hardest of digestion; and one commandment, very probably, may make greater difficulty than many creeds. But the principal reason with many for striking at mysteries first, is, because it is more decent to begin there; and after a breach once made in the main fabric, it is easy to go on to a total subversion.

subversion. The deists, in their turn, take up the same topics of moderation and lenity: "Let not the men of faith despise the men of reason; and again, let not the men of reason despise the men of faith, so long as both agree in the substantial duties:" this is the cant. And truly, if moderation is to stand for yielding and complying, be it right or wrong; and if that be all the rule we have to go by, I do not see that the men argue amiss. But surely we must stop somewhere: and where can we better stop, than at necessities, at truths and important truths? for things of that value ought never to be sacrificed to any temporal considerations, or to any views of a false and short lived peace.

From hence it may be inferred that it is not owing to any immoderate rigours of the more cautious divines, if infidelity happens to gain ground, but to the immoderate and extravagant concessions of those who are not so careful as they should be, to keep up the ancient faith in its first purity and perfection. Accordingly it may be observed, how the unbelievers caress and compliment those complying gentlemen who meet them half way, while they are perpetually inveighing against the stiff divines, as they call them, whom they can make no advantage of. They know their friends from their foes: and it may be learned from them how the case stands: *fas est et ab hoste doceri.*

To

To illustrate and confirm the general observations, let the reader reflect a little upon the unhappy conduct of Socinus, and the upshot of it. He had contrived a system for his friends to abide by, and he hoped they would rest there: but many of them, upon the same principles, whereby he had led them so far, resolved to go farther, throwing off the worship of Christ, in consequence of the mean opinion they had entertained of him. Socinus reclaimed, remonstrated, cried out aloud, hoping to stop their progress, by his earnestness (for he had yielded too much before to talk of reason now) and to fetch them back; but all to no purpose. He represented to them the dreadful consequences of discarding the divine worship of Christ: “ That it was rendering the whole christian
“ religion weak and precarious, was sapping the
“ main foundation of their faith and hope, and
“ grievously offending God the Father, and
“ Christ Jesus^s: that he had never yet met with
“ any man of true piety and godliness who
“ durst venture upon it, but that he knew several of them who had thereupon turned
“ epicureans,

^s *Ipsi^{us} Christi universa religio in dubium revocatur, aut saltem mutationi, et fini in hoc ipso seculo obnoxia redditur; summum et præstantissimum nostræ Spei et Fidei in Deum fundamentum nobis eripitur; ac denique, ne omnia hinc provenientia mala et incommoda, quæ innumerabilia sunt, enumerare hic nunc velle videar, in ipsum Christum et Deum Patrem gravissimè peccatur.*

Socin. ad Radec. Epist. iii. p. 387.

“epicureans, or downright atheists^h.” All which was true: but why could not he have seen that atheism hung at the end of the chain, till he came to the last link? never did man more expose himself than Socinus did in that instance. For indeed the throwing off the divine worship of Christ was but the natural and inevitable consequence of his scheme, if one would act consistently: and the next consequence to that, was deism, or atheism, by his own account. So it was plainly telling the world, that he had drawn his disciples into a labyrinth, and knew not how to extricate them. To go back was a mortifying thought to vain men; to go forwards, was to plunge into downright atheism. Such generally is the fate of the self opinionated, who will not listen to sober counsels in time, but precipitately strike off from the right way to follow they know not what, or to fix they know not where. I might mention those amongst us who began with *Christianity not mysterious*ⁱ, and in a few

^h Socinus. Quotquot ego vidi adorationis Christi oppugnatores, omnes tandem in atheismum sunt prolapsi; quod et tibi accidet, nisi sententiam mutaveris.

Non dixit Socinus, omnes quos ipse vidisset adorationis Christi oppugnatores tandem in atheismum fuisse prolapsos; sed neminem se ex istorum numero adhuc novisse, qui christiana pietate et vitæ sanctimonia esset præditus; imò nonnullos ex ipsis se vidisse aut scivisse epicureos, et planè atheos factos. Nec mirum esse, cum hæc ad epicureismum et atheismum homini Christi sacris initiato via compendiaría quædam foret. Disput. inter F. S. et Christian. Franken. p. 772, 773.

ⁱ A book published with that title. A. D. 1696.

few years after settled in pantheism^k little short of the broadest atheism: and others might be named, who from finding fault with the council of Nice, for corrupting Christianity^l (as they fondly supposed) have gradually, and in a course of years, come to reject Christianity itself, as needless and useless, and all revealed religion as rubbish^m. When once men break off from the reverence due to sacred writ, and to the eminent lights of the best and purest ages, they roll downwards apace, and very rarely recover it. For if they were not strong enough to stand at first upon plain and firm ground, how shall they keep steady afterwards upon a declivity? I say then, that the blame lies not upon those who abide unmoveable in the old well tried doctrine of the Trinity, but upon those that are soon shaken in mind, and depart from it. To adhere firmly to it, is not rigour, but constancy: and to forsake it, or to grow indifferent towards it, is not prudence or moderation, but unmanly levity, and wantonness, or something worse.

II. It is sometimes pleaded, that a wicked life is the worst heresy, intimating as if breaches made in our most holy faith were of slight consideration, so long as a man lives a good moral life, in other respects. I readily allow that a wicked life is the worst thing imaginable: but I conceive
further,

^k The Pantheisticon, published A. D. 1720.

^l Rights of the christian church, p. 196, &c. pub. 1706.

^m Christianity as old as the Creation, p. 421. published 1730.

further, that the espousing and propagating of corrupt doctrines, is leading a wicked life, in the strictest sense. I speak not of mere mistakes in judgment, but of espousing and propagating them; corrupting the faith in important articles, and diffusing such corruptions. A life so spent, is a wicked life, if opposing divine truths, undermining the gospel, and subverting souls, be wicked attempts, as they undoubtedly are. It must be owned, that a good life is every thing to a christian. But what does a good life consist of? universal righteousness in faith and manners. Therefore to talk of a man's leading a good life while he is corrupting the faith and disseminating pernicious doctrines, is talking contradictions. As to the sincerity, or good meaning of the men who do it, that shall be considered under another article: I speak now of the nature and quality of the thing, abstracted from the circumstances of the person: and I say, it is wickedness and a perfect contradiction to a good life. It is evil in itself, and the iniquity of it is fixed in the nature and reason of things.

Some have seemed to wonder* why commonly

* The author of the *Defence of scripture as the only standard of faith* is one of those wonderers. (p. 40.) But he intirely mistakes the case, opposing imperfection in knowledge which is his soft name for heresy, to imperfection in practice: whereas heresy is not barely imperfection in knowledge, but it is evil practice; for espousing pernicious doctrines is a fault in the conduct of life. Therefore the opposition lies between one evil practice, and another, and the question is, which is worst.

monly a warmer zeal should be shewn against heresies; than against ordinary immoralities: the wonder will presently cease, if the case be but rightly stated. Ask, whether one that commits fornication, or one that teaches and inculcates it, as lawful practice, is the wickeder man? here the case is plain, that the heretic who takes pains to spread such dissolute doctrine, and to debauch the principles of the age, is incomparably a viler man, than he that barely perpetrates the sin. So then it must be allowed, that an heretic in morality, is infinitely a greater sinner, than one who through his lusts and passions, merely leads an immoral life.

So, as to faith, ask, whether a man that perverts any material article, either carelessly, or through some prejudice, but lets it go no farther, or one that does the same thing, and then takes upon him to teach and inculcate the erroneous doctrine to others; I say, ask which of the two is the wickeder man? the latter, undoubtedly. He is the heretic in teaching and patronizing a corruption of faith, while the other who corrupts it only for himself, is no formal heretic, as I conceive, in strict propriety of speech^a, though
not

^a Qui sententiam suam, quamvis falsam atque perversam, nulla pertinaci animositate defendunt, præsertim quam non audacia præsumptionis sua pepererunt, sed a seductis atque in errorem lapsis parentibus acceperunt; quærunt autem cauta sollicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati cum invenerint, nequaquam sunt inter hæreticos deputandi. Augustin. Epist. xliii. p. 88. ed. Benedict.

not a good man. Thus, while we compare an heretic in morality with a man merely immoral; or an heretic in faith with a man that is merely a misbeliever; it is obvious to perceive that there is much greater malignity in those that teach or espouse what they ought not, than in those that merely believe wrong, or do wrong: Because the leaders and abettors of any ill thing, diffuse the mischief all around; the other let it die with them. Thus far, I presume, is plain and clear.

After thus comparing kind with kind, let us next take them as it were across, and compare the heretic in faith with an immoral man, in the common sense of the word. We will allow that an heretic in matters of mere revelation, is not so bad a man, generally speaking, as an heretic in morality; but still he may be a much worse man, or to speak plainer, may do a great deal more mischief by his doctrine, than the immoral man may do by his example. For besides his propagating dangerous errors, subverting souls, it is farther to be considered, that he sets himself up as a rival teacher, in opposition to the faithful ministers of Christ: he weakens their hands, frustrates their pious labours, perverts their flocks, lessens their esteem in the eyes of their people, gives the common enemy a handle to insult and blaspheme, raises a kind of flame and war in the church, and remotely administers to all immorality and dissoluteness of manners, by taking off the influence of the best instructions

instructions of their more knowing and more edifying guides. These are no slight mischiefs, but great, and wide, and often of long continuance, and in several respects, irreparable^b. Therefore let it not be thought strange, if the most holy and excellent men have ever expressed the greatest detestation of all attempts of that kind. Scarcely is a man excusable for advancing even a truth, to the detriment of public peace, if it be of a slight nature, not worth the contending for, or such as might innocently be dropped: but to advance falsehoods, (and in points very material) tending to create infinite disturbances here, as well as to betray many to perdition hereafter; these are crimes unpardonable if the authors see what they do: if they do not, yet their guilt remains if they might see, and will not. However, the nature and quality of the thing is not altered by their seeing or not seeing: for heresy is still heresy, though

^b Mr. Bayle describes it thus: "I do not know where we can find out crimes, which are not of a less heinous nature than that of rending the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that spouse which he has redeemed with his blood, that mother which begets us to God, which nourishes us with the milk of that wisdom which is without guile, which leads us to everlasting bliss. What fouler crime can we think of, than rebelling against such a mother, than defaming her all the world over, endeavouring to stir up her children against her, tearing them from her bosom by millions, to drag them, as much as in us lies, to everlasting flames, them and their posterity from generation to generation? Where can we find the first rate high treason against the divine majesty, unless in instances of this kind?" *Supplem. to Philosoph. Commentary. pref. p. 517.*

though a man intends well, as much as perfection is still persecution, though a person thinks and believes, that he *does God service* in it. Let it not therefore be imagined, that false teachers are to be numbered among the smaller offenders, or that they are not, generally speaking, the greatest of sinners. Accordingly, we find, our blessed Lord never shewed a keener resentment against any men whatever, than against false prophets^c, or those who taught false doctrines^d in opposition to divine truths. I interpret false prophets so as to include false teachers, such at least as corrupt sound doctrine in any fundamental article: and so Grotius and Hammond interpret, like judicious and knowing men. But Dr. Whitby disliking that construction, advances some odd speculations, to pervert the true meaning of the texts. He pleads that all false teachers^e, all that assert any thing wrong, are not included. Perhaps not: but yet all that manifestly pervert the faith, in any great degree, may be included notwithstanding; yea and must be, by parity of reason. He pretends it to be ridiculous, to judge of false teachers, by false doctrines. But how can we judge better of a false teacher, than by falsehood of what he teaches? It is the very rule which St. John lays

^c Matt. vii. 15. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22. Compare Acts xx. 29, 30. See Grotius and Hammond on Matt. vii. 15.

^d Matt. xv. 4—9.

^e Whitby on Matt. vii. 15.

lays down^f, and so does St. Paul^g; which might have deterred any considering man from calling it ridiculous. Besides, in the very reason of the thing, what rule could be pitched upon either surer or wiser? False teachers would pretend extraordinary endowments of learning perhaps, or sanctity, or piety, and an affectionate concern for the happiness of those whom they should address themselves to: but they might be detected by their fruits^h. For if their doctrine should be found contrary to the doctrine of Christ, that is conviction at once, and all their glozing pretences are worth nothing. They are false prophets, because their doctrines are false: what can be a plainer proof of it? neither is it any objection to this, that our Lord afterwards speaks of *doing the will of his Father*, and of *working iniquity*: for maintaining the truth, is doing God's will; and corrupting or resisting it, is working iniquity.

^f 1 John iv. 2, 3. 2 John 9, 10, 11.

^g 1 Cor. xii. 3.

^h Ἄρα γὰρ ἐκ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθαι αὐτούς. ἵνα μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτὰ καθ' ἑαυτὰ τὰ δυσαγῆ καὶ παρμήλαρα δόγματα τὸν οἰκεῖον ἐπιδείξαι πατέρα· ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ καρποῦ, φησὶ, τὸ δένδρον γινώσκεται. Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. L. iii. p. 226.

Sed quid ait Salvator? ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos; id est, cum cœperint divinas illas voces non jam proferre tantum, sed etiam exponere, nec adhuc jactare solum, sed etiam interpretari; tunc amaritudo illa, tunc acerbitas, tunc rabies intelligetur, tunc novitium virus exhalabitur, tunc prophanæ novitates aperientur; tunc primum scindi sepem videas, tunc transferri patrum terminos, tunc catholicam fidem cædi, tunc ecclesiasticum dogma lacerari. Vincent. Lirinens. Commonit. Cap. xxxvi.

iniquity. Therefore let this be included at least among other bad fruits, other works of iniquity; for it is properly such. Dr. Whitby pretends further, that false prophets is not a name for false teachers at large, or for heretics: that appears to be his meaning. But yet certain it is from the new Testament, and from some of the texts which he himself produces, that it is. St. Peter makes the name of false prophets equivalent to that of false teachers, who should *bring in damnable heresies*ⁱ. And St. John gives the name of false prophets^k to the heretics of his time; namely, to the Docetæ, and Cerinthians, and others of like stamp, as I have partly observed already and shall more fully shew in a succeeding chapter. Therefore it is right to interpret the false prophets which our Lord speaks of, in such a sense as to include all heretics, all false teachers, who in any grievous manner, or degree, should pervert the gospel of Christ. And so the primitive fathers interpret our Lord's words*.

As our Lord himself made use of a particular sharpness of expression against false teachers, or heretics, so also did his apostles after him. St. Paul has done it very often against those *grievous wolves*,

ⁱ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

^k 1 John iv. 1.

* Justin. Martyr. dialog. p. 100, 101, 249. ed. Jebb. alias 208, 316. Thirlby.

Tertullian. Præscript. C. iv. xlv.

Cyrill. Hierosol. Catech. iv. 1.

Hieronym. in Matt. vii. 15. xxiv. 24.

Athanas. ad Episc. Ægypt. et Lib. 270, 272.

Theodorit. Harer. Fab. L. iii. Præf. p. 225.

wolves, (as he calls them) which may appear in some measure from what has been cited above: I shall only refer to some noted texts¹, to avoid prolixity; but observing also in passing, that though St. Paul delivered an immoral man over to Satan^m for his incontinence, yet he did not use so strong an expression as anathema, or accursed, which he pronounced upon hereticsⁿ. St. Peter is exceeding tart against some false teachers of his days^o, who *privily brought in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them*. They taught men to sit loose from all decent rule and order, and under pretence of christian liberty, to run riot in luxury and dissolute behaviour. They were heretics in morality, as well as in faith, and of the worst kind: and therefore what is said of them, is not applicable to other false teachers in the same degree, but in proportion to the malignity of their respective heresy. The Nicolaitans, I suppose, were the men whom St. Peter pointed to^p. I hinted that they were heretics in faith, because their doctrine, relating to God and Christ, was much the same with that of Cerinthus, as Irenæus testifies of them^q: and thus we may easily understand why St. Peter says of them, that

¹ Acts xx. 29, 30. Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Gal. i. 8, 9.—v. 10, 12. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.—iv. 1, 2, 3.—vi. 3, 4, 5. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18. 2 Tim. iii. 1—9. Tit. i. 10—16. iii. 10, 11.

^m 1 Cor. v. 5. ⁿ Gal. i. 8, 9.

^o 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3.

^p Vid. Buddeus Eccles. Apost. p. 600.

^q Iren. L. iii. C. xi. Conf. Buddeus Eccles. Apostol. p. 367, 383, 406.

that they *denied the Lord that bought them*. St. Jude expresses himself with uncommon warmth against the same false teachers, whom St. Peter had before censured. St. John, who was all love and meekness, and charity, yet severely lashes the heretics of his times, either such as denied Christ's humanity, or such as impugned his divinity; which I shall shew in due time and place. The names which he bestows upon them are as follows, *antichrists*^r, *liars*^s, *seducers*^t, *false prophets*^u, *deceivers*^w. He scrupled not to go wandering upon the mountains, in quest of a wicked robber, a captain of a gang in order to recover him to Christ, and he did recover him^y: but with the heretic Cerinthus, a corrupter of the truth, he would not stay under the same roof^z: by which it may appear, how much he detested heresies above common immoralities. His disciple Ignatius, an apostolical man, was exactly of the same sentiments. For, says he, (speaking of them that commit adultery, and the like) "They that *corrupt* (debauch) families, *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*: therefore, if they who do such things according to the flesh, perish; how much more he, who by his pernicious doctrine corrupts that divine faith, for the which Jesus Christ was crucified? Such a man so defiled shall go into
" fire

^r Vid. Buddeus Eccles. Apostol. p. 594.

^s 1 John ii. 18, 22.—iv. 3. 2 John 7. ^t 1 John ii. 22.

^u 1 John ii. 26. ^w 1 John iv. 1. ^x 2 John 9.

^y Euseb. E. H. L. iii. C. 23, Clem. Alex. p. 959. ed. Ox.

^z See above p. 127.

“ fire unquenchable;” and so also shall he that hearkens unto him^a. See from hence how this holy bishop, soon after a martyr, abominated heresies beyond even great immoralities, as being of more diffusive and more lasting malignity, and not destroying men’s bodies, but subverting their souls. His scholar Polycarp, another eminent bishop of those times, was a man of exemplary severity against all kinds of sinners, but against none so much as against Marcion, a noted heretic, whom he calls the firstborn of Satan^b. I shall mention but one authority more, the very pious and holy St. Cyprian, of the third century. He argues the point at length, that a heretic is a much wickeder man than one that lapsed into idolatry under persecution. He states the comparison to this effect. “ This is a worse
 “ crime than that which the lapsers may seem
 “ to have committed, who yet do a severe
 “ penance for their crime, and implore the
 “ mercy of God by a long and plenary satisfaction. The one seeks to the church, and
 “ humbly intreats her favour, the other resists
 “ the

^a Οἱ ὑποφθόροι βασιλείαν θεῶν κληρονομήσουσιν· εἰ οὖν οἱ κατὰ σάρκα ταῦτα πράσσοντες ἀπέθανον, πόσω μᾶλλον ἐὰν πίστιν θεῶν ἐν κακῇ διδασκαλίᾳ φθείρῃ, ὑπὲρ ἧς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐξαυτῷ θῆ; ὁ τοιοῦτος ἔνταρος γενόμενος, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰῶνον χωρήσει, ὁμοίως καὶ ἀκίων αὐτοῦ. Ignat. ad Ephes. C. xvi.

^b Polycarpus Marcioni aliquando occurrenti sibi et dicenti, cognoscis nos? respondit, cognosco te primogenitum satanæ. Tantum apostoli et horum discipuli habuerunt timorem, ut nec verbo communicarent alicui eorum qui adulteraverant veritatem, Iren. L. iii. C. 3. Conf. Euseb. E. H. L. iv. C. 14. The like is observed of Justin, and Irenæus, by Ittigius Histor. Eccles. Sæc. 2. p. 91.

“ the church, and proclaims open war against
 “ her. The one has the excuse of necessity,
 “ the other is retained by his own wilfulness
 “ only. He that lapses only hurts himself; but
 “ he that endeavours to make a heresy or schism,
 “ draws many after him. Here is only the
 “ loss of one soul; but there a multitude are
 “ endangered. The lapsor is sensible that he
 “ has done amiss, and therefore mourns and
 “ laments for it: but the other proudly swells in
 “ his crime, pleases himself in his misconduct,
 “ divides the children from their mother, draws
 “ away the sheep from the pastor, and disturbs
 “ the sacraments of God: and whereas a lapsor
 “ sins but once, the other sins daily.”

From the authorities I have given, it may abundantly appear that Christ and his apostles, and their followers, have, in a very distinguishing manner, expressed their abhorrence of *false prophets*, *false apostles*, *false teachers*; that is to say, of heretics, and their open favourers or abettors. It is true, there may be great difference between heresy and heresy; and what is said of heresies in general, is not applicable in the same measure or degree to every heresy in particular, but in proportion only: in the mean while however, it is evident, that heresy is not a thing of slight moment, but a crime of the first magnitude, if understood to mean the espousing of false doctrines, tending to corrupt either faith or morals in any considerable instances. But I suppose,

* Cyprian, de Unitat. Eccl. p. 117.

suppose, they who think lightly of it, mean only some ignorant or careless mistake in judgment, which a man keeps to himself, and disturbs not the world with: which indeed does not amount to heresy (as I have more than once said) does not make a heretic. Heresy lies not merely in the inward thought, but in the overt acts, either teaching pernicious doctrines, or supporting or encouraging them that do. Heresy so considered is evil doing^a, and is condemned among the works of the flesh^b. So then, instead of saying, that a wicked life is the worst heresy, which is scarce sense^c, I should choose rather to say, what is both sense and truth, (generally speaking) that a life of heresy is a most wicked life: it is joining with Satan and his emissaries, in a formed opposition to God and his church, is complicated impiety and immorality.

III. But it will be pleaded further, that such as teach false doctrines, may be very sincere; and their sincerity will be their protection before the awful tribunal, or however ought to screen them from censure here. But it behoves us to consider well of this so sovereign a preservative, that we may not trust too far to it; because if it should fail at last, there is nothing then left to depend on. Sincerity, I observe, is a very equivocal ambiguous term, used in more senses than one: and therefore, before I enter deeper into the subject, I would distinguish it into two kinds.

1. Sincerity

^a 2 John 7:1.

^b Gal. v. 20.

^c See Addenda, p. 498.

1. Sincerity as opposed to hypocrisy and pretence. 2. Sincerity, as opposed to prejudice and partiality. There is no discoursing clearly upon the point, without attending carefully to this distinction. Next then let us examine how the present question about the iniquity of teaching false doctrines, or the justice of censuring them, is at all affected by what is pleaded of the sincerity of the teachers, taking sincerity either in this, or in that sense.

1. Consider we, first, sincerity as opposed to hypocrisy and pretence. Suppose the teachers of false doctrine to be verily persuaded in their minds and consciences, that such their doctrine is true, and their conduct right, and that they ought to teach it: this is bringing the matter to the case of an erroneous conscience, upon our present supposition, that their doctrine is false, and ours true. Well then, what does an erroneous conscience amount to? will it justify men in evil practices? or is it sufficient to bear them out against censure from others? No, by no means. Time was when many thought it their duty to kill Christ's disciples; they believed it to be doing God service^a: and yet nobody can doubt but those sincere men so far, were guilty of murder, and no one can think it an hard censure upon them, to declare so. St. Paul in particular, before his conversion, *verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus*^b: and yet how often

^a John xvi. 2.

^b Acts xxvi. 9.

often did he afterwards condemn himself as a sinner, for doing this very thing? because indeed he had done wickedly, in persecuting the truth, in persecuting the church of God, when he might have been better informed. The like may be said, when men sincerely deny and oppose the important truths of the gospel, and by their heresies give great disturbance, and do infinite mischief to God's church. Their being verily persuaded that truth is on their side, or that they are doing right, if it may be somewhat of excuse as a mitigating circumstance, yet is no justification of their conduct, before God, or man. They are impugnors of divine truths, notwithstanding, and subverters of souls; and therefore condemned by God, and liable to all such censures from man, as scripture ordains in case of heresy. So then, sincerity, in the first sense of the word, as opposed to guile, or hypocrisy, is of no avail in this matter. It changes not the nature of things, nor the rules of conduct: we are as much obliged to admonish, to avoid, to reject a man that thus sincerely corrupts the faith, and seduces common christians, as the man that does it in guile, and against his own conscience: because indeed, though the iniquity may not be altogether so great, yet iniquity it is; and because the mischief, either way, is the same, and it is our bounden duty to guard against it. I must further add, that scripture mentions a case of God's sending upon men strong delusion, in the way of
judicial

judicial infatuation, *that they should believe a lie^a, and that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.* Now, by the rule of sincerity (in this first sense) even such abandoned creatures as the apostle there speaks of, might plead not guilty, as teaching nothing but what they really believe, nothing which they condemn themselves for, or conceive to be false. They teach and propagate lies, but they believe them to be true all the while. There is no uncharitableness in judging^b, that all who propagate deism and infidelity in a christian country, (renouncing their baptism) are under judicial blindness, if they really believe the lies which they are so industrious to spread: and their pretended sincerity, in that case, is no alleviation of their crime, but the worst symptom of it. Therefore sincerity in this sense, as signifying only believing what one teaches, can scarce amount to a tolerable plea, by itself, since it is what may be found in men of a seared conscience, and a reprobate mind.

2. Let us next consider the second sense of sincerity, as opposed to prejudice and partiality, and see whether, and how far that alters the case, more than the other. But here a difficulty occurs at the first mention of it; how will it be proved? I do not say merely to other men,

^a 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

^b John iii. 19. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Hebr. x. 26—31. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.

men, but how will it be proved to a man's self? if a man pleads his sincerity in this case, he ought to know that he has it, or he does but trifle with himself and others. He is to prove that he has no prepossession, no bias, no leaning to a side: he is to prove that he has used all due diligence in looking out for evidence; that neither haste, nor sloth, nor impatience has hindered: he is to prove, that he has used all proper care and exactness in comparing and balancing the reasons and arguments on both sides: in short, he is to prove, that he has neither designedly, nor carelessly left out any thing in the account, nor at length made a conclusion upon any other view, or motive, but that reason and truth so required: for, submitting to reason, without any bias, that is sincerity. When he has proved this, he has proved himself sincere, and then he is justified. But I humbly conceive, that the shorter and plainer way would be, to say, that he has examined the question, weighed the reasons, and thereupon finds, that his judgment is right and well grounded, and therefore he abides by it: for that is what the whole comes to; and so the proof of our sincerity, in this second sense of the word, resolves at length into the merits of the main cause. He that has reason on his side, (I except the case of unavoidable incapacity) he is the sincere man; for if any person jumps to conclusion without premises, or lays more weight upon them than his reason will support; it is plain that there is something besides reason,

reason, which sways him, and which determines him. Be it warmth of temper, be it weariness and impatience, be it partial fondness for novelty, be it what it will; if it is not reason, it is prejudice and partiality, (I except against unavoidable incapacity) and the man is not sincere in the strict sense; which yet is the only sense that can be at all to the purpose. One might say then to such a person who pleads his sincerity, prove it, and we admit of it: sincerity without reasons to prove it, is a dead sincerity. And we may here apply what St. James says in another case, with a very little change: shew me thy sincerity without thy reasons, and I will shew thee my sincerity by my reasons. He that proves his point, best proves his sincerity. There is no other way for it, unless a man will plead ignorance, or incapacity; and then why is he confident? the sum therefore of all is, that the question about sincerity resolves at length into the main question in debate, and is to be decided by it. There might seem at first hearing, to be something in the plea of sincerity; and indeed, taking it in the first sense, it might be certainly known, to a man's self, if it could be of any service to him in the cause: but it is a point acknowledged on all hands, that a man's being thus sincerely a sinner, does not make him a saint. As to sincerity in the latter sense, that would be of service to us, if it could be proved^a; but

^a See Rogers's discourse of the invisible church, p. 22, 23. edit. 3d. Rogers's Review, p. 109.

but to prove it, is the same as to prove that truth and reason are on our side; that we are clear in the matter, and go upon sure grounds. So then, the pleading sincerity, in the present case, is only fetching a compass, to come round about again to the place where we set out. For all turns at last upon this; * who has the best reason to support his persuasion? if they who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity, teach false and pernicious doctrine, and it can be proved upon them, we are right in condemning them, and in refusing communion with them. We have no occasion to enquire into their sincerity; which, in whatever sense we take it, is an insignificant plea, and such as ought to be thrown out on both sides, serving only for amusement, diverting them from the business in hand.

It was upon these or the like considerations that I took occasion to say formerly: “ We have
“ nothing to do to inquire after your sincerity,
“ of which God is judge: neither civil judica-
“ tures, nor ecclesiastical courts, ever proceed
“ upon that bottom. Our business is, not to
“ consider the sincerity of the men, but the
“ nature, quality, and tendency of the doctrine.
“ There have been sincere Photinians, sincere
“ Samosatrenians, sincere Sabellians, sincere Papists,
“ sincere Jews and Mahometans. And indeed,
“ what sects are there that have not sincere
“ men among them?” To which I may
now

* Second defence, p. 7.

now briefly add, that all sects have many who are sincere in the first sense of the word, and have some, probably, in the second sense also, but known to God only, who alone can judge how far their prejudices are insuperable, or their ignorance unavoidable. I was willing to repeat here what I had asserted in another place, because there is a gentleman to whom this plain doctrine has appeared not a little surprizing^a. And thereupon he has been pleased to ask, Is the doctor willing to be responsible, at last, for the nature, quality, and tendency of all his notions? to which I answer, willing or not willing, every man is responsible, at last, for the doctrines he teaches. And if they are false and pernicious (unless the error were unavoidable) they fall under the same condemnation with those *idle words*, of which *account* must given at the *day of judgment*^b. But that I also may ask a question in my turn, is that gentleman willing to be responsible at last, for his sincerity, that is to say, for his impartiality in every view, free from all biases or prejudices? or is he sure that he has no culpable neglects, no precipitation of judgment to charge himself with? when he can be able to say, he knows he has not, I presume I may as reasonably say, I know what the nature, quality, and tendency of a doctrine is: and I conceive, this is a
much

^a Reply to Mr. P. C's. Letter, p. 52.

^b Matt. xii. 36.

much surer and safer rule to proceed by, than what he proposes. A well grounded assurance must be had, either of our own strict sincerity and unprejudiced reason, or else of the truth and justice of what we espouse. Now, I conceive, in the general, it is much easier to come at the latter, than at the former, nay and that the natural and regular process is, to prove the former by the latter.

The gentleman asks farther, is it impossible for him to be mistaken in any of his inquiries into truth? I know, it is very possible for frail and fallible men to be mistaken in what they say, though not in what they prove: and therefore one would take care to advance nothing as of moment to be believed, but upon clear and sure grounds, such as the reason of mankind ought to submit to. But this I shall say more to, under another head. However, to return him a question, as before: is it impossible for him to be mistaken (or rather, is it not very natural and easy for him to mistake) in judging of his sincerity? I understand it in the sense of impartiality, the only sense pertinent to the cause in hand. It is further asked; "may not some things which he has, or however shall hereafter advance, differ, in some sort from the ideas in the divine mind?" here the terms, some things, shall hereafter, and in some sort, are so obscure and indefinite, that there is no returning a definitive answer, more than this; that what God has revealed concerning the

Trinity, is, no doubt, agreeable to the divine mind: and that is all we contend for, appealing to scripture for it. However, here again, I presume, we can be at least as sure that our doctrine answers the ideas of the divine mind, as we can be that our sincerity is such as God sees no flaws in. So the question returns; which method may we best trust to? which is the surest and safest rule to judge by? by a man's knowing himself perfectly, or by his knowing the truth of things?

The author proceeds to tell us, that sincerity is a proper thing to be inquired after in such cases, and that civil judicatures at least do it, when any person is arraigned. But do they ever inquire whether the person arraigned might believe it lawful to steal in case of necessity, or might judge it his duty to affront the government, or to talk treason against the crown? if the plea of sincerity were to be admitted in such cases, it would never fail to be pleaded: we should then have new employment for juries, to sit upon men's hearts; and the verdict, of course, would be brought in for the criminal, unless he were weak enough to confess malice prepense, and that he acted against conscience. The law of the land, and the law of common sense too, has taken a shorter, wiser way, which is to presume that when a man has done an ill thing, he either knew that it was evil, or else ought to have known it. *Ignorantia juris non excusat delictum*, is, I think, the fundamental maxim they go upon. Every
man

man is obliged to know his duty; and it is at his own peril, if he mistakes the law he is to be judged by^d. What room then is there for the plea of sincerity? but the gentleman observes that the characters of such as are impeached are often inquired into, and have great weight. Yes, in order to judge whether they are guilty of the fact, and how far it was designed and wilful. But, I believe, if it should appear that the offender transgressed upon principle, and persisted in it, not sensible of any fault, but taking upon him to be wiser than the laws, or the court, and to correct his judges, such sincerity so pleaded, would be so far from alleviating the crime, or mitigating the sentence, that it would

^d Mr. Bayle, in few words, well illustrates this article.
 “ There is good reason for not excusing an ignorance of right
 “ at human tribunals: for though it may possibly happen that a
 “ man is honestly and innocently ignorant of what the laws of
 “ the land ordain; yet as the judges cannot discern whether
 “ he speaks sincerely or no, they cannot take up with his excuse,
 “ for fear of the disorders which might happen upon it: since a world
 “ of malefactors and disturbers of the public peace might make use
 “ of the same justification. Therefore to prevent a general evil, they will
 “ make no exception to this general rule, *ignorantia juris non excusat*. This may possibly
 “ be unjust and very hard upon particular persons; but it is
 “ necessary to sacrifice something to the good of society.

“ This is undoubtedly the reason why human tribunals admit no
 “ excuse upon an ignorance of right: but let us beware imagining that
 “ God proceeds by the same reason: as he is the searcher of hearts,
 “ he knows most assuredly, whether such and such person be under
 “ an invincible ignorance of right; and if he be, absolves him as
 “ freely as if the ignorance were only of fact.” Bayle Supplem. to
 “ Philosoph. Comment. p. 589, 590. Compare Rogers’s Review, &c. p. 104.

would do just the reverse: and the court would be obliged to judge according to the nature and quality and tendency of the fact committed, and not by the mistaken sentiments of the person arraigned. I return therefore to what I before said, that in the question which concerns our behaviour towards the impugnors of the christian faith, we have nothing to do to consider the sincerity of the men, but the quality of their doctrine. As to the rest, God is judge: and he will make all reasonable and merciful allowances for unavoidable failings.

But is it not hard and severe censure (may some say) to condemn those sincere men who mean as honestly as we can do, and to make their guilt the ground of renouncing communion with them? I answer: this is not a fair representation. That they are as sincere as we are in one sense, as believing what they teach, we admit, and it is nothing to the purpose: that they are sincere, as it signifies impartial, is the point to be tried; and it depends upon the issue of the main cause. In the mean while, we make not their guilt the formal cause of condemning them, but their corrupt doctrine, which indeed generally carries guilt with it, but more or less according to the circumstances and capacities of the persons. Therefore we say not how deep their guilt is: of that God is judge. But this we say, that we should ourselves be guilty
in

* Sober and charitable disquisition, p. 14, 23, 39, 40, 42, 44, 47.

in a very high degree, if we either taught such doctrines, or did not fully and plainly condemn them, refusing communion with such as openly and resolutely espouse them. What we do in this case, is not so properly damning others, not passing any peremptory judgment of their final estate (to their own master they stand or fall) but it is conscientiously discharging a weighty trust, cautiously providing, first, for our own salvation, and next for the salvation also of as many as we have any concern with. If our adversaries be honest and conscientious, so much the better for them, and we heartily wish they may be found such before the high tribunal. We approve of what Salvian very mildly and tenderly says, in respect to this very case, so far as concerns all that conscientiously, and in the integrity of their hearts differ from us:

“ They are heretics, but do not know that they
“ are so. They are heretics in our judg-
“ ment, not so in their own: for they esteem
“ themselves such good catholics, that they
“ even throw upon us the infamous charge
“ of heresy. Such therefore as they are to us,
“ we are to them. We know assuredly that
“ they are injurious to the divine generation
“ of the Son, in making him inferior to the
“ Father: they, on the other hand, think us
“ injurious to the Father in believing them
“ both equal. Truth is on our side; but they
“ presume it is on theirs. We in reality ho-
“ nour God; but they think, their opinion
“ does

“ does him most honour. They are indeed un-
 “ dutiful to God, but this they esteem a great
 “ duty of religion. They are impious, but they
 “ believe it true piety. They err therefore, but
 “ they err with an honest mind : not out of hatred
 “ to God, but with affection to him, believing that
 “ they both love and honour the Lord. Though
 “ they have not the right faith, yet they think
 “ they have a perfect love of God. How they
 “ shall be punished, at the day of judgment,
 “ for this their error of a false persuasion, no
 “ one can know except the judge^f.” Thus
 far we can go in our charity towards them:
 but our charitable dispositions towards their per-
 sons, ought never to bribe us to think favour-
 ably of their principles, or move us to desert the
 proper defence of gospel truths, or hinder us from
 declaring that the corrupting the faith of Christ,
 is in its own nature a wicked thing, is detestable
 practice.

It will not be improper here to make men-
 tion of a noted and useful distinction of sin, or
 wickedness, into material, and formal; one
 conceived to go along with the matter of the
 transgression considered in the abstract, the other
 conceived to make the person formally a trans-
 gressor, and a wicked man. I dare not say, that
 every one who openly maintains the worst part
 of popery, or judaism, or mahometism, is for-
 mally a wicked man: I know not how far, in-
 vincible

^f Salvian. de Gubernat. Dei, L. v. p. 87. ed. Brem.

vincible ignorance, or unavoidable incapacity, or unconquerable prejudices (owing, suppose, to education, or to a degree of enthusiasm, or particular circumstances) may be pleadable in his favour. But still, after all the most candid allowances that can be made, I should not scruple to censure his opinions as wicked, (materially considered) his doctrines impious, and his attempts to propagate them, vile and execrable. They are truly so in the nature of the thing, abstracted from the circumstances of the person: and to a man that has the full and free use of his faculties, and opportunities suitable, they are crimes of the first magnitude, and ought to be censured as such. The gentlemen with whom I am now debating this point, will not scruple to declare as much, with respect to the doctrine of persecution, and they are very severe against St. Paul^g for practising upon it, though he was, in one sense, perfectly sincere, honest, and pious^h (so far as concerned his then present sentiments) in what he did. He went upon the doctrine of the Old Testament, in relation to false prophets, and blasphemers, was right in his general principle, but wrong in the application. He acted not out of envy, malice, or other secular motives, like the Jews who crucified Christ; a new case happened which he

^g Vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon, p. 35, &c. Reply to P. C's. Letter, p. 40, &c.

^h P. C's. Letter to the author of the Vindication, p. 38, &c. Rogers's visible and invisible church, p. 24, 25.

he had not considered, so well as he might: he was so over officious to do his presumed duty, that he staid not to examine strictly whether it was duty or no; so eager and impatient to serve God, in his way, that he considered not, whether it was really serving him, or the contrary. This appears to have been his case, and a pitiable case it was. I question whether the corrupters of the christian faith, many of them, could claim for themselves so fair an apology. Yet St. Paul was to blame, because the thing was evil in itself, and by the use of due care, he might have known it. The same I say of sincere teachers of bad doctrines: the thing is evil in itself, and, generally speaking, they may, by a right use of their faculties, know that it is so. But whether they may, or may not, it concerns us not to inquire: it is enough for us, that their doctrine is false and dangerous, tending to subvert the gospel of Christ.

IV. But it will be further objected, that we all along take for granted that our doctrines are true, and theirs false: and why are we so confident in this matter, unless we think ourselves infallible? The author of *Sober and charitable disquisition*, is pleased to intimate, that though we will not own ourselves infallible, yet in fact we avow itⁱ. He endeavours to prove the charge thus, “ In the point in which you are certain, you are infallible, and wherein you pre-
“ tend

ⁱ *Sober and charitable disquisition*, p. 37.

“ tend to be certain, you do equally pretend to
 “ infallibility: for certainty is, *cui non potest*
 “ *subesse falsum*. You must have evidence for
 “ a point in which you pretend to be certain,
 “ not only to put the matter out of doubt, but
 “ enough to assure you a mistake is impossible.
 “ I am infallibly certain two and two are four—
 “ it must be; and cannot be otherwise; without
 “ such evidence there is no certainty: and where
 “ error is impossible, there is infallibility¹. Nor
 “ can I see that any thing short of downright
 “ infallibility can justify the behaviour (of the
 “ trinitarians) if that can. But to disclaim in-
 “ fallibility in words, and claim it in fact, is
 “ too common a practice, though no very com-
 “ mendable one^{*}. It is questionable whether
 “ either side have such evidence as will justify
 “ them in thinking a mistake impossible; with-
 “ out which there is no proper certainty; and
 “ if there be not, there is room for mutual charity
 “ and forbearance¹.”

I do not think it kind or fair in this instance,
 to bring in the word infallibility, where it has
 plainly nothing to do, only to throw an invi-
 dious reflection upon some persons who are far
 from deserving it: that is not a sober, or a cha-
 ritable, method of debate. The sum of his ar-
 gument, when the colours are taken off, is no
 more than this; that if we have not demonstra-
 tion, as clear as in mathematics, or metaphysics,
 on

¹ Ibid. p. 37.

^{*} P. 39.

¹ P. 38.

on our side of the question, we ought not to insist upon it so far as to make it a term of communion. Now, suppose we should say we have, (though we say no such thing) yet would that be what the world has been used to call, claiming infallibility, or pretending to be infallible? would it not be very wrong to say that a man pretends to be infallible, only because he is very certain that the propositions in Euclid are infallibly true? such an unmanly playing with words is unbecoming in any cause, much more in this. The infallibility of science, resting upon the nature of things and the supposed truth of our rational faculties, is quite another thing from personal infallibility supposed to be an extraordinary gift from heaven, to a pope, or a council, or to a church at large. Things so distinct, ought not to have been confounded. Whatever certainty we pretend to, we rest it intirely upon the proofs we produce, for the world to judge of, and not upon any personal endowments. How foreign therefore, and beside the mark, must it appear, to speak of our pretending to be infallible? indeed, the papists have a hundred times told us, that we can have no proper certainty without infallibility: and if that were true, there's an end of the reformation at once. The ground and basis upon which the protestant name stands, and without which it would sink instantly, is, that there may be a proper certainty in matters of faith, doctrine, and discipline, without infallibility. They that endeavour to say this

true

true principle, undermine the foundation upon which we rest, and betray the clearest and best cause in the world, to papists on one hand, and to sceptics on the other. I take this matter to be of exceeding great moment, and therefore shall not scruple the pains of considering it at large. I shall first represent the answers which have been given to the objection, (as urged by papists) in the words of our judicious Chillingworth: and I shall next consider what answer may be proper to give to the same objection, in the main, as dressed up anew by adversaries from another quarter.

1. Mr. Chillingworth writes thus: “ Though
“ we pretend not to certain means of not err-
“ ing in interpreting all scripture, particularly
“ such places as are obscure and ambiguous, yet
“ this methinks should be no impediment but
“ that we may have certain means of not erring
“ in and about the sense of those places which
“ are so plain and clear that they need no in-
“ terpreters: and in such we say, our faith is
“ contained. If you ask me, how I can be sure
“ that I know the true meaning of these places?
“ I ask you again, can you be sure that you
“ understand what I, or any man else says?—
“ God be thanked that we have sufficient means
“ to be certain enough of the truth of our
“ faith: but the privilege of not being in
“ possibility of erring, that we challenge not,
“ because we have as little reason as you, to
“ do so; and you have none at all. If you
“ ask,

“ ask, seeing we may possibly err, how can we
 “ be assured, we do not? I ask you again, seeing
 “ your eye sight may deceive you, how can you
 “ be sure you see the sun when you do see it^m?
 “ a pretty sophism! that whosoever possibly may
 “ err, cannot be certain that he doth not err.
 “ A judge may possibly err in judgment, can he
 “ therefore never have assurance that he hath
 “ judged right? a traveller may possibly mistake
 “ his way, must I therefore be doubtful whether
 “ I am in the right way from my hall to my
 “ chamber? or can our London carrier have no
 “ certainty, in the middle of the day, when
 “ he is sober and in his wits, that he is in the
 “ way to London? these, you see, are right
 “ worthy consequences, and yet they are like
 “ to your own, as an egg to an egg, or milk
 “ to milkⁿ.

“ Methinks, so subtle a man as you are,
 “ should easily apprehend a wide difference be-
 “ tween authority to do a thing, and infalli-
 “ bility in doing it: and again, between a con-
 “ ditional infallibility, and an absolute. The
 “ former, the doctor, together with the article
 “ of the church of England, attributeth to the
 “ church, nay, to particular churches, and I
 “ subscribe to his opinion: that is, an autho-
 “ rity of determining controversies of faith,
 “ according to plain and evident scripture and
 “ universal tradition, and infallibility while they
 “ proceed according to this rule. As if there
 “ should

^m Chillingworth, p. 99, 100.

ⁿ P. 104, 105.

“ should arise an heretique that should call in
 “ question Christ’s passion and resurrection, the
 “ church had authority to decide this contro-
 “ versy, and infallible direction how to do it,
 “ and to excommunicate this man, if he should
 “ persist in his error^a.

“ The ground of your error here is, your not
 “ distinguishing between actual certainty, and
 “ absolute infallibility. Geometricians are not
 “ infallible in their own science; yet they are
 “ very certain of these things which they see de-
 “ monstrated: and carpenters are not infallible,
 “ yet certain of the streightness of those things
 “ which agree with their rule and square. So
 “ though the church be not infallibly certain that
 “ in all her definitions, whereof some are about
 “ disputable and ambiguous matters, she shall
 “ proceed according to her rule; yet being cer-
 “ tain of the infallibility of her rule, and that
 “ in this or that thing she doth manifestly pro-
 “ ceed according to it; she may be certain of
 “ the truth of some particular decrees, and yet
 “ not certain that she shall never decree but
 “ what is true^b.

“ Though the church being not infallible,
 “ I cannot believe her in every thing she says,
 “ yet I can and must believe her in every thing
 “ she proves, either by scripture, reason, or uni-
 “ versal tradition, be it fundamental, or be it
 “ not fundamental.—Though she may err in
 “ some things, yet she does not err in what
 “ she proves, though it be not fundamental^c.

“ Protestants

^a P. 105.

^b P. 125.

^c P. 133, 134.

“ Protestants believing scripture to be the word
 “ of God, may be certain enough of the truth
 “ and certainty of it. For what if they say
 “ the catholic church, much more themselves,
 “ may possibly err in some fundamental points,
 “ is it therefore consequent, they can be certain
 “ of none such? What if a wiser man than I
 “ may mistake the sense of some obscure place
 “ of Aristotle, may I not therefore, without
 “ any arrogance or inconsequence, conceive my-
 “ self certain that I understand him in some
 “ plain places which carry their sense before
 “ them?—We pretend not at all to any affu-
 “ rance that we cannot err, but only to a suf-
 “ ficient certainty that we do not err, but rightly
 “ understand those things that are plain, whe-
 “ ther fundamental, or not fundamental. That
 “ God is, and is a rewarder of them that seek
 “ him: that, &c.—These we conceive both true,
 “ because the scripture says so, and truths fun-
 “ damental, because they are necessary parts of
 “ the gospel, whereof our Saviour says, *Qui non*
 “ *crediderit damnabitur.*

“ I do heartily acknowledge and believe the
 “ articles of our faith to be in themselves
 “ truths as certain and infallible as the very
 “ common principles of geometry, or metaphy-
 “ sics: but that there is required of us a know-
 “ ledge of them and an adherence to them, as
 “ certain as that of sense or science; that such
 “ a certainty is required of us under pain of
 “ damnation, so that no man can hope to be
 in

“ in a state of salvation, but he that finds in
“ himself such a degree of faith, such a strength
“ of adherence; this I have already demonstrated
“ to be a great error, and of dangerous and
“ pernicious consequence^a.

“ Though I deny that it is required of us
“ to be certain in the highest degree, infallibly
“ certain, of the truth of the things which
“ we believe (for this were to know and not be-
“ lieve, neither is it possible unless our evidence
“ of it, be it natural or supernatural, were of
“ the highest degree) yet I deny not, but we
“ ought to be and may be infallibly certain that
“ we are to believe the religion of Christ. For,
“ 1. This is most certain, that we are in all
“ things to do according to wisdom and rea-
“ son, rather than against it. 2. This is as
“ certain, that wisdom and reason require, that
“ we should believe those things which are by
“ many degrees more credible and probable than
“ the contrary. 3. This is as certain, that
“ to every man who considers impartially what
“ great things may be said for the truth of Chris-
“ tianity, and what poor things they are which
“ may be said against it, either for any other re-
“ ligion, or for none at all, it cannot but appear
“ many degrees more credible, that the christian
“ religion is true, than the contrary. And from
“ all these premises, this conclusion evidently
“ follows,

^a P. 140, 141.—290.

“ follows, that it is infallibly certain, that we are
 “ firmly to believe the truth of the christian re-
 “ ligion.—There is an abundance of arguments
 “ exceedingly credible, inducing men to believe
 “ the truth of christianity: I say, so credible,
 “ that though they cannot make us evidently see
 “ what we believe, yet they evidently convince,
 “ that in true wisdom and prudence, the articles
 “ of it deserve credit, and ought to be accepted
 “ as things revealed by God^b. ”

I have laid these several passages together, drawn out of this excellent writer: by which it may* appear what kind of certainty is professed by protestants, and how much the protestant cause depends upon that single article. The sum is, that though we have not strict mathematical demonstration for matters of belief, so as to make faith and science the same thing, yet we have such a certainty as leaves no reasonable room for doubt, such as is sufficient to build saving faith upon, and as much authority also as is necessary to support it. And thus we get clear of popish subtlety and sophistry, shewing that there is a medium, namely, moral certainty, between scepticism on one hand, and papal infallibility on the other.

2. No

^b Chillingworth, p. 295. alias p. 254. Compare Stillingfleet's Rational Account. P. I. Chap. vi. 178, &c. 187, &c. 196. Chap. vii. 205, &c. Compare also Mr. Cumming, who has very fully and solidly treated this argument. Dissertat. on Scripture Consequences, p. 61.—76. Considerations, &c. p. 315.—321.

2. No sooner are we thus relieved on that hand, but presently we are attacked from another quarter, and with the same artillery as before, only a little differently managed, as it is now to serve different purposes. For here again it is alledged, that without either infallibility, or demonstration, we can have no proper certainty, nor any just authority to declare matters of faith, or to insist upon them as terms of communion: and the conclusion here aimed at, or what must naturally follow, is, to fit loose to every thing, unconcerned for the faith of Christ, cold and indifferent towards the great truths of the gospel. Deists here, and papists there combine together, to oppose the truth, and both extremes meet in one. But let us examine how our new adversaries manage. Their whole strength lies in one single dilemma, thus: "either you have certainty, or you have not: if you pretend to certainty, that is claiming infallibility; if you renounce certainty, you have no authority to determine faith, or prescribe terms of communion." We answer, by distinguishing the kinds and degrees of certainty, and therefore do say, that though we claim not infallibility, yet we do claim certainty sufficient to guard against scepticism or heresy, and to maintain just authority.

The author of the *Sober and charitable disquisition*, intimates, as before said, that we disclaim infallibility in words, but in fact avow it. The same thing has been said by a multitude

of other writers: I shall cite one only for a sample, because he has urged it as ingeniously and sarcastically as a man could well do, in a dedication to the pope. "Your holiness is
 "not perhaps aware, how near the churches of
 "us protestants have at length come to those
 "privileges and perfections which you boast of
 "as peculiar to your own.—You cannot err in
 "any thing you determine, and we never do:
 "that is, in other words, you are infallible, and
 "we always in the right." It may hereupon be observed, how this witty gentleman takes upon him to ridicule a very necessary distinction, between an assurance that we cannot err, and a sufficient certainty that we do not err: a distinction, which the judicious Chillingworth laid all imaginable stress upon, perceiving that the whole protestant cause depended upon it. For if we cannot have sufficient certainty that in several things, relating to faith and worship, we do not err, how do we justify our separation from the church of Rome? if we are not certain that therein we do not err, then neither are we certain that she has erred, and that there was a just cause for leaving her: but all must resolve into humour, fancy, fickleness, and unsupported persuasion. It was this very principle of a sufficient certainty, that we do not err in what we prove, which rescued us from the tyranny of those who pretend that they cannot err in whatever they define. The difference
 between

c Steel's dedication to the Pope, p. 2.

between those two is so great, and so palpable, that one would think it must argue either very slow faculties, or a perverse temper of mind, for any person to confound them. However, to give a more distinct idea of the two cases, I shall endeavour to represent the difference to the eye in one view, in two opposite columns, corresponding to each other.

Popish infallibility.

1. The church simply infallible in what she defines.
2. The church says so, is the last resort, and decisive.
3. Submit to authority in all instances whatever: for authority here stands for proof.
4. Absolute implicit faith in man.
5. Examination superfluous, and dangerous: prove nothing, swallow every thing.

Protestant certainty.

1. The church morally certain in what she proves.
2. Not because the church says it, but because scripture and reason, by her mouth declare it.
3. Submit to authority in such instances only where you see no good reason to the contrary; for then it is reasonable so to do.
4. Absolute implicit faith in God only.
5. Examination allowed and approved: prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

Popish infallibility.

6. The subject obeys the interpreter at all adventures, and submits as to an infallible verity.

7. Be a thing ever so unreasonable, or plainly false (transubstantiation for instance) it must be received as divine, though a human deception.

Protestant certainty.

6. The subject obeys his own reason in submitting to what is proved, and what the reason of mankind ought not to reject.

7. Nothing ordered to be received, but upon the foot of reason and scripture, with great tenderness to private judgment: only taking for granted, that our faculties are true, and may in things plainly proved, be depended upon.

From this summary view, it may sufficiently appear, that there is a very wide difference between the pretended papal infallibility, and protestant certainty: and that as the one is contrived to introduce and perpetuate all imaginable errors, so the other is undoubtedly the surest way to exclude all pernicious errors, at least, and to preserve the most weighty truths.

The ground of what I call protestant certainty, is moral evidence: which though it comes not up to infallibility, or to the evidence of demonstration, yet is certain enough for all the purposes of faith, or of a competent authority to maintain true doctrine, “Our church,” (as a
judicious

judicious writer says) “no where makes infallible certainty of assent a necessary condition of faith, it being sufficient to make faith certain, if our rule be infallible, and that applied with moral evidence^d.”

Moral evidence, for the most part, governs the great affairs of the world, while rigid demonstration serves rather for the entertainment of contemplative men, than for the uses of common life. And since God has so ordered both our religious and secular affairs, as to lay us under a necessity of submitting, in most cases, to moral evidence, he has thereby bound it upon us as a duty; so that if we have not strict demonstration for what we believe, yet it is demonstration that our evidence is such as must command our assent, under pain of incurring the divine displeasure. As to the nature, and quality, and force of moral evidence, in general, I refer the reader, for satisfaction, to an excellent writer, who has distinctly and fully considered it^e. I shall content myself with making only a few occasional observations.

It seems to me a prejudice done to religion, that the learned and philosophical sense of the words probable and certain, (so different from the common vulgar sense of both) has been so often made use of by divines. When a common christian hears it said, that it is only probable, not absolutely certain, that Christ lived or died;

^d Puller's Moderation of the church of England, p. 142.

^e Ditton on the Resurrection of Christ, Part II. p. 93, &c.

died; or that the christian religion is true, or the like; how must it astonish him, or afflict him? In the vulgar use of the words probable and certain, it is a shocking thought; though in the scholastic sense, all may be right, as there is no rigid or scientific demonstration of any matter of fact, or of any article of pure faith: and every thing short of that the schools are pleased to call probable only, not certain. If we were to hear any one, in ordinary conversation, say, that it is probable, not certain, that there is such a city as Rome, Paris, or Constantinople, would not the man be thought mad? or if he were to say further, that it is probable only, not certain, that there was once such a prince as Alexander, or Julius Cæsar, or William the Conqueror, or Henry the Eighth, should we take him to be right in his wits? And yet it is in such a sense only, that divines mean it, when they say, that the christian religion is probably, not certainly true; understanding at the same time, that it is as certain as any antient fact can be, fully, perfectly, indisputably certain, according to what the world generally means by certain. I should think therefore, it were better to leave off the scholastic way (which must needs give offence, and which few understand) and to adapt our phrases to the common acceptance, as also to scripture language. Look the scripture through for the meaning of the word certain and certainty, and you will find that it stands for certainty of facts,

which

which is proper certainty, when properly proved; and it is but sinking the idea, and confounding common hearers or readers, to discredit it with the low name of probable and probability; which, in common speech, scarce rise higher than doubtful. I chose to mention this the rather, because I find that infidels have taken advantage of those expressions, to run down Christianity as not certain, but barely probable^f. And how that must sound to a common English reader, let any man judge.

I would observe farther, that the like mischiefs may sometimes follow from an improper use of the word believe. Were any one to say, he believes there is such a country as France, or such a person as the Pope of Rome, he would presently be asked, why? can he doubt of it? that expression of believing commonly carries in it an idea of doubtfulness, and is used to denote a diffident assent. But when we would express any fact of which we have no doubt, we say we know it, or are certain of it. So here again there appears to be a difference between the language of the literati, and common speech, while the same ideas are not affixed to the same words, here and there. However, this latter case will not be apt to breed so much confusion as the former, though it may create some: which might perhaps be prevented by the addition of an adverb,

^f See Christianity as old as the Creation, Chap. xii. p. 184.

verb, when we are speaking of matters of faith, saying we assuredly believe, or undoubtedly believe thus and thus.

Now to return to the author of *Sober and charitable disquisition*^a. He objects to us, that we have not a proper certainty of what we believe, like as we have of what we know, as that two and two are four. It is granted we have not. Belief is not strictly science, nor faith vision: what then? in his sense of proper certainty, there is no certainty that the sun shines when we see it, nor that fire warms when we feel it, nor that there is any such thing as the sun in the firmament, nor indeed any material world: for, I apprehend, philosophers are agreed, that there is no strict demonstration of these things^b. Have these things therefore no proper certainty? Yes, they have, and such as ordinarily make stronger impressions than abstract reasonings, or ideal speculations, and are more out of the reach of all doubt to the bulk of mankind. So say I likewise of matters of faith; they have a proper certainty, such as things of that kind admit of, such as is fitted to common capacities, such as the world is governed by, such as pass for undoubted certainty in common language and common estimation, such as God has ordained for use, and has obliged us to follow, and such as both our present
interests,

^a *Sober and charitable disquisition*, p. 37.

^b See Clarke's *Notes upon Rohault*, Part 1. C. 2.

ⁱ *Sober and charitable disquisition*, p. 38.

interests, and our eternal happiness are made to depend upon. So much for the certainty of matters of faith, considered in the general.

As to the particular point now before us, the certainty of it stands thus: we are morally and indubitably certain of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. And though we presume not to say, or to think, that we may not, or cannot misconstrue scripture, yet we have many strong reasons to persuade us that in this instance we do not: and therefore it is infallibly certain, (as Mr. Chillingworth well argues with respect to christianity in general) that we ought firmly to believe it; because wisdom and reason require, that we should believe those things which are by many degrees more credible and probable than the contrary. Thus have we sure and safe grounds to go upon* And as we are in strict duty bound to receive it as a revealed truth, so
because

* I may here observe something of Mr. Bayle. In his Philosophical Commentary, (Part 1. p. 337, &c.) After taking notice, that the romanists have perpetually reproached the protestants as destitute of any well grounded certainty, and that the protestants had answered the objection a thousand times over; he adds, that it never was fully answered, never can be, in the common way, only it may be irresistibly retorted upon papists; and the conclusion he at length rests in, is, that God requires no more than a sincere and diligent search after truth. Mr. Bayle is so far right; but he forgot to tell us, how we may arrive at a well grounded certainty of that fact, that we have made a sincere and diligent search, without prejudice or bias, without any culpable sloth and negligence in inquiring, or precipitancy in judging. There is no mathematical, or metaphysical certainty

because it is a very important one, an article of the foundation, we are as strictly bound to preserve it, and earnestly to contend for it: and because one very proper means of preserving it, as well as of keeping ourselves pure, is to refuse communion (according to the general direction of scripture in such cases) with those that openly impugn it, therefore a necessity is laid upon us so to act, and woe is unto us, if we act otherwise. But we do not therefore say, as is unkindly insinuated, that there is not room left for mutual charity: for we verily are persuaded, yea, and assuredly know, that our so acting is charity both to the faithful and unfaithful, and towards all mankind; and that

as to this fact, which by him is made the main thing. Moral certainty is the utmost that any one can here pretend to, and that not so great as we can have of matters of faith; neither can our sincerity be any way so certainly proved, as by the evidence we produce for the doctrines we maintain. Therefore Mr. Bayle commits a fallacy, or is guilty of great forgetfulness, in making a well grounded certainty of our sincerity the last resource, rather than the other; for generally speaking, it is not so sure or so firm a ground to rest on, as the reasons of things, or the merits of a cause. For, considering how obscure the search is into the inmost springs of action, or persuasion, which are very involved and intricate, how careless men are apt to be in the examination, and how liable also to be imposed upon by self flattery; I say, these things considered, it is much safer to rely upon the moral certainty appearing in things, than upon any pretended certainty we may conceive of our own sincerity. I believe, the fallacy in this case has been chiefly owing to the equivocal meaning of the word sincerity: for because in one sense, as opposed to hypocrisy, a man may easily know he is sincere when he is so; it has been too hastily concluded, that he may as easily know it in the other sense of the word, as opposed to prejudice or partiality.

that the charging it as a breach of charity, is hard and uncharitable censure, is judging according to appearance only, not according to truth.

All depends upon this, that men take care, in every thing of moment, to go upon sure grounds, to know what they do. That is the very thing which chiefly distinguishes resolution from obstinacy, orthodoxy from heresy, wisdom from rashness, and righteousness from iniquity. God has given us rational faculties to discern truth from error, and right from wrong: and we ought to be well assured, in whatsoever we teach, as of moment, that we have made that use of our faculties which we ought to have done, to discern between good and evil. It is not our persuasion that can justify us, there are many fond persuasions; and we are not commanded merely to obey our persuasions (though we ought not to go against them) but to obey the truth. It is not merely our sincerity that can support us, for of that we know nothing, in any just and proper sense, but by the right and reason of the case; and we are not commanded to hold fast our sincere errors, but to hold fast that which is good.

But what? will some ask, do we then pretend to know that our doctrine is true? is faith advanced into knowledge? to this I answer, that we know, not scientifically, but with moral certainty, which is knowing according to the use of common speech: and though we do not strictly know what we merely believe, yet we
know

know that we have such moral evidence for what we believe, as binds us to the belief of it. In this sense, we know what we do, and we have a well grounded assurance, that what we do is right, which is our justification. And this is what we ought always to have (I speak more particularly of guides and teachers) in points of importance, and where it is not allowed to suspend. Cannot we know, for instance, that a deist is rash in rejecting all revealed religion? Yes, we know it as certainly, as that it would be rash to deny, that there is any such city as Rome, or Constantinople; or that there ever were such men as Virgil, Horace, or Cicero. Cannot we know that a Jew is much in the wrong, to deny that the Messias is come? Yes we know it as assuredly, as that a man would be in the wrong to deny that the twelve Cæsars lived some centuries ago. Cannot we know that the popish doctrines of transubstantiation, image worship, service in an unknown tongue, and the like, are not primitive christianity? Yea, we know it as evidently, as that modern Rome is not ancient Rome, or that London is not Canterbury. Cannot one know that the socinian interpretation of John i. 1. or of Hebr. i. 10. or of the texts relating to Christ's pre-existence, is not the mind of scripture? yea, one may know it as certainly, as that a counter is not the king's coin, or that a monster is not a man. I give these instances to shew, that it is not merely persuasion or sincerity, that we have to plead
for

for our faith, but certainty and well grounded assurance; such as is judged sufficient for wise and considerate men to go upon, and conduct themselves by, in secular affairs of greatest consequence. We have no occasion for infallibility, to support us in such a claim: common reason suffices, taking in the proper helps, and making the due use of them with humility and care, with sobriety and godly fear*. Having gone through the most material objections I had met with, I may now proceed to the slighter and less considerable, but dispatching them in fewer words.

V. It has been sometimes invidiously suggested, that our zeal and constancy in contending so earnestly for what we call faith, is bearing hard upon our christian brethren of an opposite persuasion,

* But here again it may be asked, may not a Jew, a deist, a papist, a socinian, or an arian, with equal confidence say that he knows he is in the right? he may so, and probably will. Yet truth and falsehood have a real distinction in nature, and depend not on fond conceits, or strength of persuasion. If any man presumes to say, he knows, when he does not know, he deceives himself, and is guilty before God; unless some unavoidable incapacity, or unconquerable prejudice, which God only is judge of, makes him innocent. And in that case it is not because he delivers his real persuasion (for it may be impious as to the matter of it) nor because it is well grounded, for he only thinks it is; but it is because of his infirmity, which himself neither sees nor knows, that God acquits him. How much any of us may stand in need of such merciful allowances, we cannot say: but in the mean while, all we have to look to, or to trust to, is to be as watchful and careful, that we go upon sure grounds, as if no such allowances might be made us. Such wary conduct is well enough understood and practised in temporal affairs, where any thing considerable is depending: the like we are to observe in spiritual.

suasion, in afflicting and oppressing them, and in short, in persecution and popery. It can scarcely be conceived, that any sensible men should seriously advance such odd fancies, or that they mean any thing more by them, than rhetorication and flourish. Yet certain it is, that such things have been offered with a serious air, and by men of no mean parts: I shall give some examples. One writes thus: “The humour of creed making, and creed imposing, is one of the most grievous instances of persecution, and the grand source of every other kind of it. If it be only their good opinion of us, that our fellow christians suspend upon our non assent to their confessions of faith, they in a very inhuman and unchristian way, persecute us. It is in itself barbarous, says Mr. Marvel, for these faith stretchers, whosoever they be, to put mens consciences upon the torture, to rack them to the length of their own notions¹.” This declamatory talk has been gravely, solidly and satisfactorily answered by a very good writer^m: and yet the objector chose rather to declaim again upon the same head, for several pages togetherⁿ, than to quit his false reasonings, or acknowledge his mistakes. To say the best of it, it is a very wanton way of talking in a subject

¹ Occasional paper, Vol. ii. No. 1. p. 12, &c.

^m Preface to the Westminster confession, p. 96—104.

ⁿ Defence of the scripture as the only standard of faith, by the author of the occasional paper, p. 35—40.

subject of the last importance, and is making a jest of the liberties of mankind here, and of their happiness hereafter. If those gentlemen have been so inhumanly and barbarously persecuted, how is it that they have not yet assumed the title of martyrs, or confessors? for, persecution and martyrdom are a kind of correlates, which suppose and imply each other. And what is that inhuman torture, that barbarous persecution which they have endured? have they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments? have they wandered about in sheep skins or goat skins, in dens, or caves of the earth, for the sake of truth and godliness? No, but good christians have suspended their good opinion of them, that is the grievance. And for what? not for thinking as they please (for thoughts are free) but for overt acts of heresy, or perhaps blasphemy; for making public appeals to the people, in order to draw them off from listening to their better guides, to seduce them from the faith they have been baptized into, and to impose upon them such doctrines as must endanger their everlasting salvation. The kind and charitable endeavours of good men, whose province it is to prevent such fatal mischiefs, in the mildest and gentlest way, such as Christ himself has prescribed. These are the inhuman and unchristian persecutions, which those gentlemen complain of. But to be a little more particular, they must not take it amiss to be told

in return to their odd complaint: 1. That they are guilty of a most intolerable abuse of words and names, in speaking of rack, torture and persecution, where, even by their own account, there is not so much as a semblance of them: for it amounts after all, only to the suspending our good opinion of them. 2. In this way of giving new and wrong names to things, they may, if they please, make the primitive churches also, and martyrs, yea, and Christ and his apostles, persecutors: for they suspended their good opinion of unbelievers. 3. The primitive discipline, by their account, will be most of it persecution; and so instead of ten heathen persecutions (as they are commonly reckoned) they may increase the number of persecutions to five hundred or more, and call them christian persecutions, or rather unchristian ones, for that, it seems, is the name for them. 4. It is wrong in these gentlemen, to furnish the papists with fresh topics for real persecution. For since it will follow from this account, that persecution is scripture doctrine, it may be pleaded, that papal persecutions differ in kind only, or degree, from the other, but in the main, are warranted by the New Testament itself, and by the universal practice of the church in the best and purest ages. 5. This will likewise be furnishing infidels with new arguments against christianity, as it is a persecuting religion: for it is certain, that the pretended persecution here complained of, is such as scripture itself prescribes, as I have before proved.

6. But

6. But to come yet cloſer up to thoſe complainants, let it be conſidered, whether they are not themſelves the real perſecutors, guilty of that very crime which they charge upon the churches of God. To revile men for doing their bounden duty, to load them with reproaches for righteouſneſs ſake, to libel and defame them for maintaining the faith of Chriſt in a chriſtian way; to ſeducer their flocks from them, and to demand at the ſame time to be careſſed and honoured as fellow chriſtians: theſe are grievous impositions and oppreſſions, and may amount to a degree of perſecution, properly ſo called. They that reſuſe to conform to order, who ſubmit not to ſound words and whoſome doctrine, who give unneceſſary diſturbance, and aſſume more than belongs to them; they are the invaders of liberty, the oppreſſors and perſecutors of religious and righteous men.

It will be ſaid perhaps, that creed makers and creed impoſers, as ſuch, aſſume more than belongs to them. But if that be a fault, it is a fault, common to all parties: for they who impugn the doctrines of the church, are themſelves as much creed makers, and creed impoſers, by their appeals to the people, and by their impoſing their own doctrines on the public, in a clamorous way, (and generally with ſatyr and invective upon all that diſlike them) as others are who impoſe their creeds in a more regular and authoritative manner. Much has been ſaid againſt creed making, by many who have as long creeds as others, only not

the same creeds, and who are as confident in dictating, and dogmatical in defining, and as eager to impose their own sentiments, as it is possible for men to be. The question, properly, is not, whether there shall be creeds or no; for all parties are for them, under one shape or other^a, and always will be: but the real matter in controversy is, who shall have the drawing of them, or who shall impose them. And when men declaim against imposing of creeds, the secret meaning of all seems to be, that they would not have such a power or privilege lodged in any hands but their own. However, the fault lies not in imposing creeds, (where there is a competent authority) but in imposing false doctrine for true: and therefore the complaint is wide while it runs only in generals, against all creed making, and against impositions at large, especially as practised in the protestant churches. We pretend not to impose articles of faith in an arbitrary manner, or to require any implicit belief in the church: we require no man to receive them for true, because they are ours, but because they carry their evidences along with them, and will bear examining.

But it will be said, that the protestant churches however, do determine beforehand, that every person upon examination, ought to find those things true which they have formed into creeds or articles. They do so, as to the main things, at least, and where is the harm? It is no more than presuming that there are some things

^a See Addenda, p. 502.

so certain, that the reason of mankind ought to submit to them, and that those things which they have defined, are of that number. To illustrate this matter farther, we may put a few cases: let the propositions, suppose, of Euclid be given into any man's hand to examine, there will be no presumption in telling him beforehand, that he will find them true: and if he afterwards says the contrary, it will be no breach of charity or of good manners, to tell him, that either he has not duly examined them, or is not sincere in his report, or labours under an incapacity. Thus far will readily be allowed with respect to propositions of mathematical, or metaphysical certainty: we may reasonably determine beforehand, in such instances, that they will be found true, upon a due examination, where capacity is not wanting. The like may be said of an account, which has been carefully cast up, and proved by the never failing rules of art: if any man comes after, and pretends to find an error in it, one may be assured beforehand, that the error is his own, and that he has been guilty of some neglect in the casting it up. Apply this reasoning to cases of moral certainty: some of them are so plain, that a man may have as well grounded an assurance there, as any where. Let the question be about the truth of Christianity in general: a point so clear and so certain, that there is no uncharitableness in judging that the person who brings in a verdict against it, has never fully and

sincerely examined, or labours under some unconquerable infirmity. The like may be affirmed with respect to many particular doctrines contained in our creeds or articles: there is such a degree of moral evidence to attest them, that the reason of mankind ought to receive them. Now, the imposing such doctrines in those whose province it properly is, is not assuming, but is discharging a weighty trust: and this is quite another thing from the popish way of imposing what they please, forbidding men to examine, or so much as to doubt of what they define; because their church, they say, is infallible. Our way supposes that men ought to examine, (if capable) in order to know that the doctrine proposed is true^b: and we judge, with reason, that if they examine with care, and decide with impartiality, they cannot think otherwise of it. The foundations we go upon are, that reason is reason with every man; that human faculties are true; and that there is such a thing as moral certainty, and that it is ground sufficient for the governors of the church to rest their own faith upon, and to hold out their light to others committed to their charge, and for whom they are so far responsible. Indeed, if the church governors should happen to administer poison, instead of wholesome food, there will then be reason for complaint: but let not the complaint run against creed making, or creed imposing in the general, (which is foreign and impertinent)

^b See Addenda, p. 504.

impertinent) but let the particulars be specified, wherein they have rigorously imposed something false, or at least doubtful; and if the charge can be made good against them, they then ought with the same zeal to throw such article out, as they keep the rest in. Upon the whole, there is neither persecution, nor popery, merely in imposing creeds, &c. under pain of church censures, or exclusion from the ministerial function: but there is good order and discipline in it, such as Christ and his apostles have commanded, and the church in the best and purest ages has observed, and such as is necessary to keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace.

VI. There is another objection near akin to the former, namely, that for church governors to direct men what to believe, and to exclude them from the christian church, for impugning such belief, is assuming a kind of dominion over the faith and consciences of other persons. To which I answer; men may call those powers which Christ has left with his church, by what invidious names they please, but they cannot thereby alter the nature of things. That Christ has appointed his ministers as guardians of the faith, and has empowered them to excommunicate the impugnors of it, is a very plain case: and this is all that any protestant churches plead for. Whether it should be called assuming dominion over the faith and consciences of men, (since it is assuming no more than Christ has commanded) let the objectors consider. The objection is worded in ambi-

guous terms, which carry no certain or determinate ideas: the very phrase of *having dominion* over ones *faith*, though a scripture phrase, is of obscure meaning^c; and 'tis hard to know whether St. Paul, who has used the phrase^d, disclaimed all such dominion, or only declined the use of it in some circumstances. If it means, prescribing to others arbitrarily for ones own pleasure or advantage, not pursuant to Christ's directions (as some interpret^e) then St. Paul disclaimed it absolutely: but if it means only the exercise of the power of excommunication, such as St. Paul did exercise over Hymenæus and Alexander (for so others interpret^f) then St. Paul only declined the use of it in some particular circumstances. Whatever the phrase means, this is certain, that the protestant churches claim no more than a directive, or instructive power over men's faith or consciences. Church censure and discipline affect only the overt acts, the speaking,

^c See Addenda, p. 505.

^d 2 Cor. i. 24.

^e See Grotius and Hammond.

^f See Whitby and Wells.

^g "The laws of the church regard only the external conduct. They do not require the inward belief of the mind in articles of faith, or the secret grace of the heart in moral duties. These things the ministers of Christ teach and exhort, but do not command. But the actions which they prescribe by their laws, are such external performances as are the visible signs, the natural and proper expressions of such inward acts and dispositions of soul, as Christ has commanded. And these laws they do not affirm to have any farther obligation on the conscience, than as the performance directed by them is a proper sign and expression of such an inward disposition of the heart as Christ requires, and consequently is agreeable and subservient to his law. And when even the action is thus qualified, they do not pretend that the conscience is obliged by their law, but by Christ's." Rogers of the visible church, p. 101.

ing, writing, teaching perverse things, not the thinking or conceiving them: for, how can a man be censured for private thoughts, which no one knows but himself? But if any persons presume to teach false doctrine, and endeavour to draw disciples after them, then indeed they are accountable to the church, as much as another kind of offenders are accountable to the state. Christianity is a social religion^h, and the members of it are bound to submit, in their external behaviour, to the rules of the society, under pain of forfeiting the outward privileges of it. And with what modesty, decency, or consistency, can any man claim a right of perverting his fellow christians, as he pleases, and at the same time deny others a right of doing what in them lies to preserve their people from falling into the snares laid for them? It is to very little purpose for seducers to plead, that their consciences are oppressed by church censures, or their liberty restrained: for would not the consciences of better men be more oppressed, and their liberty restrained, if they were obliged tamely to sit by, and look on, while their flocks are torn from them, not permitted to make use of those spiritual powers which God has put into their hands? either therefore let the adversaries be content to keep their thoughts to themselves, and then nobody can have dominion over their faith at all; or if they resolve to usurp upon others,

^h See Bishop Potter on Church Government, C. i.

others, and to take all advantages for spreading false doctrines, let them not be offended, if the guides of souls, whose peculiar charge it is, use their best endeavours, in a proper manner, to apply such preservatives as scripture directs in those cases. This is not taking cognizance of the inner man, but of the outward behaviour only; and that so far as such outward behaviour affects the prosperity or safety of the whole community, and might be of dangerous consequence to the peace of the church, the purity of the christian faith, the honour of God and religion, and the everlasting interests of mankind. Now, can the guarding, in a christian manner, against such fatal mischiefs, be properly or justly stiled affecting dominion over others? or is it not rather making use of a power which God has given them, to hinder others from exercising a lawless dominion over christians, and over the church of God? Say, that the church is fallible, what then? are her adversaries infallible? or are they less liable to abuse their liberty, than the church is to misemploy her authority? But enough of this.

VII. There is another objection of more weight than the former, namely, that the censoring of heretics may often provoke them to return the like censures; and thus a kind of reciprocation of censures may be carried on to the great disturbance of the public peace, and the destruction of christian charity. A late writer expresses the thing in a very lively manner,

manner, but somewhat over strained, thus: “ May
“ not arians, in their turn, think you guilty
“ of as great a sin, in opposing what they
“ call the truth? and may not christians, on
“ all sides, in so great and indeed necessary
“ difference of opinions, rant and bluster against
“ one another for the same reason, and bring
“ their constant accusations, against those who
“ cannot think and say as they do, for deny-
“ ing the faith; or against those who have the
“ same notions with themselves, for betraying
“ it? But what then? would not christian
“ churches become cock pits, or fencing stages?”

In reply to what is here urged, I will not so far disguise my sentiments, as not to allow that it is a consideration of some moment: but yet there are other considerations of still greater moment, which must preponderate, and weigh down the scale. It is very certain that ungodly men, for a cloke, will make use of the same pleas, and claim the same privileges which righteous men do: and an erroneous conscience may honesty (if invincibly ignorant) usurp the same rights which a well grounded faith has a clear title to. But still there is a very wide difference between true and false, between right and wrong: and it is no argument against the use of proper methods in a righteous cause, that others may abuse the same methods in a cause of a very contrary nature and quality. But I shall

ⁱ Reply to Mr. P. C's. Letter, p. 44.

shall debate this point more distinctly, both from scripture and reason, as it is a point of some moment.

1. Let us consider what light we can have from scripture. It is fact, that the power of excommunication began to be misemployed, and to be turned against the church itself, even in the times of the apostles: for Diotrephes, loving to have the pre-eminence, cast some persons out of the church^k, very unwarrantably, and even in defiance to St. John himself. Yet that usurpation of power, or abuse of power, did not move St. John to condemn the use of it in a proper way. So far from it, that he threatened to repay Diotrephes in his kind, to excommunicate, or depose him, for his so rashly censuring other persons. *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words*^l. We may observe likewise from St. John's 2d epistle^m, and from the charges given to the churches of Pergamus and Thyatiraⁿ, that the use of excommunication was to be retained in the church, and was recommended from heaven by our Lord himself. And if it be said, that the Nicolaitans were an abominable sect, that alters not the case at all, so far as the present objection is concerned: for, the more wicked any sect was, the more likely to retaliate upon the church, and to make all possible disturbance, when provoked to it. Notwithstanding

^k 3 John 10. ^l 3 John 10. See Bishop Potter on Church Government, p. 380. ^m 2 John 10, 11. ⁿ Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20.

standing all which, that accidental inconvenience, of a misapplication of power, was not judged considerable enough to counterbalance the great advantages and important uses of the same power rightly employed. And as we have the authority of an apostle, who had the spirit of God to direct him in what he wrote, and in what he did; this alone may be sufficient to determine the point in question. For whatever we may be apt to imagine, (upon a superficial, or limited view of circumstances) it is certain, that infinite wisdom cannot err, and therefore by that direction we ought to abide. St. Paul seems to have left us a general rule for all cases of this nature, in these words: *Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries°, &c.*

2. As to the reason of the thing, it is a known rule, that when there is a necessity on one hand, it is in vain to plead inconveniencies on the other. God has sent mankind a charter of salvation: it is necessary, above all things, that this charter be preserved inviolable; that it should not be falsified, perverted, frustrated. There will always be some or other, set on by the grand enemy of mankind, who will be labouring to corrupt and adulterate it, either adding to it, or taking from it: and if such practices are suffered to go on without rebuke, there is an end of christianity. Here lies the necessity of watching against all such attempts,
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• Philip. i. 27, 28.

and strenuously resisting them; which cannot be done effectually without condemning the authors, and in the last result separating from them. Hence may arise mutual contentions and bickerings: let them bear the blame who give the offence, and are aggressors in the contests. Truths of everlasting moment must be supported, whether with peace, or without. The apostles were censured as men that *turned the world upside down*^p. The fault was in the world, and not in them. Their errand was important enough for the risking such a consequence. Our blessed Lord himself predicted what the accidental effect would be of the preaching of the gospel; that it would *set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother*^q, and so on; which perhaps, in ridicule, might be called making cock pits, or fencing stages: but the gospel was worth it, and carried more than enough in it, to make mankind amends. As long as religion is held in any value or esteem, and meets with opposers, it must occasion warm disputes: who would wish that it should not? What remedy is there for it, while men are men, which is not infinitely worse than the disease? a total contempt of religion might end all disputes about it, nothing else will: and even then our contentions would not be fewer, but more; only they would be about matters of another kind, about every thing that we should value or esteem. Upon the whole, it is better,
I suppose,

^p Acts xvii. 6.^q Matthew x. 35.

I suppose, that we should have some religion, though we often contend about it, than to have none at all, and to quarrel ten times oftner about trifles. It has been complained of, and has been thought to be a shrewd remark, that ecclesiastical history is made up of little else but religious contests and animosities of churchmen. But, pray, what is the history of mankind, but a history of wars and contentions about something or other, which they had a tender concern for? and it would be strange indeed, if a history of religion, the greatest concern of all, should not contain many contests. Who could believe that men had any religion, if during the state of the church militant, and while there is like to be great opposition, there should be no warmth or vivacity shewn in defence of it? But this I have hinted more than once already. Now to return to our point. Though the censuring of men that corrupt the faith, may provoke, may increase ill blood, &c. yet it must be done: and to decline it, when necessary, is a culpable moderation, a blameable timidity. But it is farther to be considered, that though rejecting some persons from the communion of the church, may inflame the quarrel between the church and its adversaries, yet it tends to preserve and promote the peace of its members within. Therefore St. Paul prescribes this very remedy, for the securing the peace of the church: *mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which*

which ye have learned, and avoid them^r. So that though in some sense or respect, strict order and discipline may accidentally heighten differences, yet its true and natural tendency is peace; which it serves and promotes in one view, much more than it obstructs or disservices it in another. The objection therefore is grounded upon a false presumption, that peace suffers upon the whole, by such conduct; which we deny: for, upon a just ballancing of the account, peace is very much befriended by it*, and true and proper christian peace could not long subsist without it.

However, I allow there is so much weight in the objection, which I have been answering, that the consideration of it ought to make us exceeding cautious and deliberate, as to the steps we take, and the heights we proceed to, in all cases of that nature: not to multiply necessities without, or beyond reason; not to divide upon indifferent rites, customs, ceremonies, as Pope Victor is known to have done; nor upon dubious points of discipline, as Pope Stephen did: who had indeed right on his side, as to the matter in dispute, but pushed it too rigorously; and St. Cyprian, though mistaken, was yet the wiser, humbler, and better man. Where the main cause is both clear and weighty, yet even there many prudential cautions should be taken; not to suspect any persons without sufficient evidence; not to be prying
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^r Rom. xvi. 17.

^{*} See Rogers's Review, p. 290, 291.

and inquisitive into their retired sentiments (ministers only excepted, or candidates for the ministry, whose faith should be strictly inquired into^a, before they be allowed) not to proceed to rigours with any man, till all gentle measures have been first tried; nor to break communion with any who do not openly espouse, and pertinaciously abet false and pernicious doctrines. These, I apprehend, are the prudential cautions proper in such cases: and there may be more of like kind, which every man's common reason and discretion may supply. If truth and peace can be maintained together, that is the most desirable conjunction which a good man can wish for: but if human affairs will not always admit of both, then the rule is, out of two evils to choose the least, or of two advantages to prefer the greatest. Where divine truths, and human customs or dictates clash, we must *obey God, rather than man*: in other cases, civility and tenderness towards all men, is true obedience towards God. It requires good judgment to discern, under various circumstances, the true and precise boundaries between sinful men pleasing, and christian charity: but this is certain, we are as much (yea, and more) obliged to maintain the fundamentals of faith, as to keep up peace. And it would be but an ill way, to preserve peace (if it might be called peace^b) by forfeiting our christianity; or to
enlarge

^a 1 Tim. iii. 9, 10. v. 22.

^b Vid. Hilar. contr. Auxent. p. 1263. edit. Bened.

enlarge christian communion, by receiving those who, in a strict and proper sense, are not christians^c. “Unity is not to be purchased at so dear a rate. It were a thing much to be desired, that there were no divisions; yet difference of opinions touching things controverted, is rather to be chosen than unanimous concord in damned errors. As it is better for men to go to heaven by divers ways, or rather by divers paths of the same way, than in the same path to go on peaceably to hell. *Amica pax, magis amica veritas*^d.”

VIII. It has been sometimes pleaded, in bar to the principles which we have before asserted, “That no one ought to be excluded from christian communion, whatever his faith be, provided he acknowledges sacred writ for his rule, and is ready to admit any creeds or confessions drawn up entirely in scripture terms.” To which I answer, that a man who never declares his faith otherwise than in scripture words, is very safe from censure, and can never be excluded from christian communion for heresy. It is the maintaining doctrines contrary to scripture, in points fundamental, which makes a heretic; and therefore if a man never interprets at all, but barely repeats the words, he is perfectly secure so far; and no one can condemn him. If this then be all that the plea aims at,
it

^c Vid. Suicer. in voce *Χριστιανός*. p. 1540, 1541. Bingham. *Antiq. B. 1. C. iii. f. 4.*

^d Chillingworth, p. 218. alias 253.

it is foreign and impertinent to the cause in hand.

But if the meaning of the plea be this, that though a man teaches any wild doctrines whatever, yet if he does but father those doctrines upon sacred writ, by any feigned and forced construction, (acknowledging scripture all the while as his rule of faith) he ought to be received as a fellow christian; I say, if this be the plea, it is so manifestly absurd and ridiculous, at the first hearing, that it can scarce deserve a serious answer. For does the faith of Christ lie in words only, or in things^e? or is the repeating of the bare letter of scripture, after a man has spirited away the sense, delivering divine truths, or contradicting and defeating them? to make the case plainer, I shall illustrate it by a resembling instance. Franciscus a Sancta Clara, a known papist, (who published his book A. D. 1634,) contrived to make our 39 articles speak his own sentiments, reconciling them with great dexterity, and most amazing subtilty, to the council of Trent. Now, put the question, whether upon his thus professing his faith in protestant terms, popishly interpreted, he could justly claim every
privilege

^e Nulla vox divina ita dissoluta est et diffusa, ut verba tantum defendantur, et ratio verborum non constituatur. Tertullian de Præscript. C. ix.

Nec sibi blandiantur [Hæretici] si de scripturarum capitulis videntur sibi affirmare quod dicunt: quum et diabolus de scripturis aliqua sit loquutus: et scripturæ non in legendo consistent, sed in intelligendo. Hieronym. dial. adv. Lucifer. p. 386.

privilege of a church of England man, and whether we were bound to receive him as a fellow protestant? A very little share of common sense, I presume, will be sufficient to determine the question in the negative. The like I say of any person who interprets our christian charter to an antichristian sense: he has no more right to be admitted as a fellow christian, than the other had to be admitted a fellow protestant. For though both admit the same words or forms which we do, yet so long as they teach things directly contrary to those very words or forms rightly understood, they are chargeable with false doctrine, in our account; and their teaching such doctrine in a manner so insidious and fraudulent, is so far from alleviating their guilt, that it greatly inhances it. It may be said perhaps, in the way of reply, that Franciscus a Sancta Clara knew that he perverted the true meaning and intent of our articles, while those that pervert the sense of scripture, may believe that they justly interpret it. If that be the case, it is true that it will make a difference: but I have no occasion to consider that difference here, being foreign to the present point. For supposing the perverters of scripture to do it ever so wickedly and fraudulently, yet they may make use of the same plea, that they are ready to profess their faith in scripture words, and therefore ought not to be excluded from christian communion. A valentinian, a montanist, a muggletonian, or any other
other

other, wild sectary, by this rule, might equally claim christian communion, provided he does not reject scripture itself, and turn infidel. Now, a plea which thus manifestly overshoots the mark, ought to be rejected as an absurd plea, like as an argument which proves too much, ought to be thrown aside as worth nothing. Those who undesignedly pervert scripture, should have something better to plead than their retaining the words of scripture: otherwise their plea reaches no farther than theirs does who industriously do the same thing; for they also retain the same words. Upon the whole therefore, a man's retaining the bare letter of scripture, while he corrupts the sense is no sufficient reason for receiving him to christian communion. For he is not only chargeable with denying the faith, as much as if he had rejected the text itself^f, but with perverting the words, and defeating the sense, while he professes an outward veneration for both. I cannot better express this whole matter than a late excellent divine of our church has done, in the words here following: "It is not barely repeating so many words, but the assenting to the proposition expressed by those words, which Christ requires.—The proposition affirmed or denied in Christ's words, is the doctrine of Christ. He therefore who will not believe the proposition affirmed in Christ's words ought to be

^f *Tantum veritati obstreperit adulter sensus, quantum et corruptor stilus.* Tertull. de Præscript. C. xvii.

“ be looked upon by the church, as an hea-
 “ then and a publican.—Let us take for
 “ instance, these propositions, *Jesus is the Christ*;
 “ *He was crucified; rose again from the dead*;
 “ every word and sentence of scripture, in which
 “ these articles are delivered, the most heretical
 “ among the Quakers will profess their assent
 “ to, but then they mean only this, that Christ
 “ is an internal principle of light within them,
 “ that his crucifixion and resurrection are no-
 “ thing else but the mortification and regenera-
 “ tion of every believer.—Now are these the
 “ doctrines of Christ, or are they not? If they
 “ are not, if they are contrary to the doctrines of
 “ Christ, then the persons understanding these
 “ scriptures in such a sense, may justly be looked
 “ upon as heathens and publicans, and, not-
 “ withstanding their readiness to profess the
 “ words of scripture, unfit to be admitted, or
 “ continued in the church².” Thus far Dr.
 Rogers, whose words I take to be a just and full
 answer to the objection I have been examining.
 The reader will observe, that I have not been
 considering how far scripture words may, or
 may not be proper in creeds, tests, confessions,
 and the like, and in what cases it may be pru-
 dent or necessary to express the scripture sense
 in phrases suited to times, places, and circum-
 stances: questions of that kind fall not within
 my present argument, but have been largely and
 thoroughly

² Rogers's Review, p. 399, 400.

thoroughly treated of by others^h. All I am concerned to shew is, that if any persons are found to pervert the sense of scripture in any notorious manner, so as thereby to undermine the essentials of faith, their pretending a high regard for the authority of sacred writ, or for the letter of it, is not reason sufficient for receiving them as fellow christians.

IX. There is one objection more, which might have been brought in as an appendage to objection the second, had I sooner thought of it, but may conveniently enough have a distinct consideration here; namely, that the charging heresy as a crime of the first magnitude, seems to give too much countenance to the sanguinary proceedings of papists against it. The objection runs thus: “If these charges against them
“are just, and their fellow creatures have any
“authority to chastise them for such enormi-
“ties, I cannot see why the Romish church
“should be blamed for roasting such accursed
“villains (as the arians) among other heretics.
“If we think a traitor against an earthly po-
“tentate worthy of death, how much more
“one who vilifies the Lord of heaven and
“earth? Is a murderer of an earthly father ob-
“noxious to death, and shall such a viper as
“this escapeⁱ? If civil power have authority to
“punish

^h Preface to the Westminster confession, p. 105.—142.

Stebbing's rational Enquiry, p. 19.—56.

Rogers's Review, p. 395.—411.

ⁱ Vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon, p. 12. Compare Mr. P. C.'s Letter in answer, p. 23, 24.

“punish heretics, such a villain deserves far
 “severer penalties to be inflicted on him, than
 “multitudes of others whose injuries to their
 “neighbours expose them, by our statute laws,
 “to the gallows^k.” The sum of this argument, so far as it may be called an argument, amounts to thus much; that it is wrong to charge heresy in general, or arianism in particular, with wickedness and impiety to any high degree, since it is neither felony nor treason: or if it be as bad, or worse than either, then the papists are justified in all their sanguinary proceedings; which among protestants, is confessedly absurd. To which I answer, that the objection proceeds upon several false suppositions: as
 1. That those who plead only for spiritual reproofs or censures, are pleading at the same time for civil penalties. 2. That the magnitude of crimes is to be measured by what passes in civil courts. 3. That civil courts look strictly to the demerits of the criminal, and not rather to the necessities of state. In opposition to these and the like mistakes, I observe:

1. That scripture itself warrants and commands spiritual reproofs and censures; which is a point very foreign to that of civil penalties. St. Jude, St. Peter, St. John, St. Paul, and Christ himself are often very sharp and poignant in their reproofs, and censures, where they had no thought of exposing the offenders to civil penalties, or of justifying any sanguinary proceedings.

* Reply to Mr. P. C's. Letter, p. 21.

ings. St. Jude scruples not to call the heretics of his time *ungodly men*, deniers of the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, *filthy dreamers*, *despisers of dominion*, followers of *Cain*, *Balaam*, and *Core*, *raging waves of the sea*, *foaming out their own shame*, *reandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*; and yet amidst all this severe but just reproof, I presume, he never would have advised the correcting them by fire and faggot. St. Peter treats the same men with the like sharpness of stile, in his second epistle: but it would be injurious to conclude from thence, that he was for sanguinary measures. St. John, in his epistles, gives very hard names to heretics, calling them *antichrists*, &c. yet this does not prove, that he was for using any violent methods with them. St. Paul describes the heretics of his time in very black characters, such as they deserved, yea, and pronounced them accursed; and yet it does not appear that he would have approved the roasting of them, had they been much greater villians than they were. *Shaming* them, *humbling* them, and bringing them to *repentance*, that their *souls might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, was the utmost hurt he intended them. Our blessed Lord himself rebuked many with great sharpness, calling them *hypocrites*, *blind guides*, *children of hell*, *fools*, *whited sepulchres*, *serpents*, *vipers*¹, and the like: and yet it does not appear, that he would have approved any violent sanguinary proceedings with those

¹ See Matt. xxiii.

those very persons. Therefore it is wrong to furnish the Romanists with arguments for their cruelties; as if civil penalties were just wherever smart rebukes are proper, or as if it were warrantable to punish according to the degree of wickedness, though the wickedness be of such a kind as falls not properly under civil cognizance.

2. There may be crimes much greater than felony or treason; such as apostasy, (which is *crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame*) blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and some kinds of heresy. Certainly, it may be lawful for christian divines to set forth those wickednesses in their proper colours, and they ought to do it: though at the same time, they may desire that the offenders in such sort may rather live to repent, than suffer death, or any civil penalties. And what if felons, or traitors against the state, be punished with death? It does not from thence follow, that they are the greatest of sinners; but reasons of government require, that crimes which more particularly affect the state, should be punished by the state: the rest are left to the censures of the church, and the righteous judgment of God.

3. And I must further observe, that civil penalties look not merely at the demerits of the criminal, but the necessities of the civil community. Civil governors do not, cannot observe any exact proportion: God only can do it, in his final retributions. Theft and murder are crimes

crimes of a different magnitude: yet they are equally liable to capital penalties. As to heresies of such a kind, they may be greater crimes than either, in God's sight: but it is not so necessary for a state to take cognizance of them, unless they break in upon civil peace. Felonies will hurt many innocent men, who have no possible way to escape: none can be hurt by heresies (after proper warning given) but with their own consent. And therefore if spiritual censures, reproofs, admonitions, and other the like preservatives be duly applied, those are ordinarily sufficient in cases of this nature: for, if after such warnings given, any persons will still listen to deceivers, and run in with them, they perish with their eyes open, and may take the blame to themselves. I mention this as one reason among many, why heresies, though supposed to be crimes of the first magnitude, yet ought to be treated in a milder way than crimes against the state. And I shall subjoin another reason to enforce the former, namely, that when we speak of heresies as heinous crimes, we mean as materially considered, not determining whether the men are formally so wicked as those expressions amount to; which again makes a sensible difference between this case and the other of felonies or treasons, where the offenders commonly sin directly against conscience, and cannot plead so much as a good meaning or design. However, that favourable presumption, pleadable in excuse for heresies, ought to be no bar to spiritual

ritual censures. For if the persons offend knowingly, then no censure of that kind can be thought severe: and if they offend ignorantly, such awakening admonitions may be of great use to them, to recover them from their stupid lethargy. And if the effect answers, they are delivered from a doubtful state, which at most could promise them pardon only, or rest them upon uncovenanted mercy, to a state of well grounded hope and joy, intitling them to a reward: but this I hinted before^m. Upon the whole, there appears no force in the disjunction, that heretics ought either to be punished with death, or not censured as blasphemers and grievous sinners. Extremes are always wrong, whether of mildness, or severity: and there is a medium between taking violent measures with them, and treating them as fellow christians. The sin of corrupting the faith, dividing the church, and seducing the people, cannot easily be too much aggravated, in order to create a just abhorrence of it: and it is the more necessary, because ordinarily men are not so apprehensive of the heinousness of this sin, as they are of the iniquity of treason or felony, or gross immoralities.

I have now finished what I intended as to the argumentative part: but it remains still to confirm the main thing by the judgment and practice of the ancients, who may be properly called in, and will be found to be of considerable weight

^m See above, p. 126.

weight in the controversy. If the scripture be plain to us now, in all things necessary, the same scripture was undoubtedly plain to them, and to them more especially: and therefore, their judgment or practice cannot but be of use to us, if it be only to render plain things still plainer, as there are degrees of plainness.

After I had finished this chapter, I had the pleasure of reading Mr. Ball's little treatise of 33 octavo pages, in answer to most of the same objections^a which I have been considering. If I may be allowed to give my judgment of it, it is written with great strength and solidity, without colouring or disguises, and is extremely well suited to common capacities. One shall not easily find more good sense, and close argument in so short a compass. The *Sober and charitable disquisition*, as I apprehend, was intended by way of reply to that pamphlet of Mr. Ball's. But every discerning reader who shall compare the two performances together, will easily perceive the difference between artificial logic and natural, between laboured subtleties and plain naked truth.

^a An answer to some common objections made against those ministers in the west, who have appeared in defence of the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, and its importance. Written with all plainness, for the use of private christians. By J. BALL. Exon: printed by A. Brice, &c. A. D. 1727.

C H A P. VI.

A summary view of the judgment and practice of the primitive churches, in relation to the necessity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity.

THE very judicious and learned bishop Bull has represented this matter in the fullest and clearest light, in a set treatise, professedly written by way of reply to Episcopius, as I have before hinted in the entrance. To him therefore I refer such readers as will be at the pains to look thoroughly into the subject of this chapter; while I content myself with giving a summary view of the main things, interspersing here and there a few slight observations, which may be as it were supplemental to that great work. There are three ways of coming at the sentiments of the primitive church, as to the necessity, or importance of believing any doctrine: 1. By consulting the ancient creeds, conceived to take in the most important articles of faith, when rightly understood. 2. By observing what doctrines were all along condemned as impious and heretical. 3. By collecting the testimonies of fathers declaring their own sentiments, or the church's, or both, as to what doctrines are important, or what opinions pernicious and dangerous.

I. I shall

I. I shall begin with creeds. Here it is observable, that the doctrine of the Trinity, implicit or express, always made an article in the ancient creeds: nay, several learned men have conceived, that in the earliest times, it made up the whole°. Episcopius himself was of opinion that the ancient baptismal creed was no more than this: I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost^r. He designed, by the observation, to serve his own hypothesis, viz. that the divine eternal generation of the Son was not inserted in the creeds from the beginning. But he did not consider how much at the same time he disserved his own cause another way, by making the doctrine of the Trinity so important, as to have been the sole article (if I may so speak) or intire matter of the first creeds. Nothing can be stronger for that doctrine, than that the ancient creeds should be comprized in these few words: *I believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; since it is declaring the sacred three to be the one God^a,
and

° Bull Judic. Eccl. Cathol. C. iii. f. 3. p. 308. C. vi. f. 80. p. 331. Wall. Hist. of Inf. Baptism. Par. ii. C. ix. f. 11. p. 591. Stillingfleet. Vindic. Trin. 178. Suicer. Thesaur. T. ii. p. 1093.

^r Antiquissimum, quodque in primâ baptismi administratione jam inde ab ipsis apostolorum temporibus usitabatur, hoc erat: credo in Deum Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum sanctum; nempe ad præscriptam ab ipso Jesu formulam.

Episcop. Institut. L. iv. C. xxxiv. p. 340.

^a Perspicuum est in hac formulâ, credo in Deum, Patrem Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, vocem Deum ἀπὸ novῆ ad omnes tres, nempe Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum referri. Quod
græci

and recommending that faith as the prime thing, or the one thing necessary, without which no man could be a christian. Bishop Bull very justly observes, that the short creed now mentioned expressed the doctrine of the Trinity in a clearer, closer, and stronger manner than some of the more enlarged creeds afterwards did. For the inserting of additional articles, time after time, carried the words Son and Holy Ghost so far off from the word God, that it might look as if that high title, which belonged indifferently to all three, was there applied to the Father only: though the compilers of those larger creeds really designed the same common application of the name God, as before^t. From hence therefore it appears, that allowing Episcopius the supposition which he goes upon, in relation to the short concise form of the first baptismal creed, yet it is so far from favouring his

græci adhuc clariùs exprimunt; *Πιστεω ἐν τῷ Θεῷ, τῷ Πατρὶ, τῷ Υἱῷ, καὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι.* Ita sane hanc brevem confessionem veteres intellexerunt. Hinc Tertullianus (adv. Prax. C. xiii.) communem christianorum de patre, filio, et spiritu sancto fidem exponens, ait; et Pater Deus, et Filius Deus, et Spiritus Sanctus Deus, et Deus unusquisque. Cyprianus item, &c. Bull. Judic. C. iv. f. 3. p. 308.

^t Mihi sane videtur in his paucis verbis: Credo in Deum, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum, magnam illam veritatem, nempe Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, unum esse cum Patre Deum, aliquatenus clariùs exprimi quam in fusioribus quibusdam symbolis quæ subsequuta sunt. Nam per additamenta illa post verba, credo in Deum Patrem, et adjectiones post mentionem Filii, non repetitâ voce Deum in articulis de Filio, et Spiritu Sancto, videri poterit, et nonnullis visum est, Dei appellatione ad solum Patrem pertinere; planè contra mentem ac sententiam eorum qui latiora illa symbola condiderunt. Bull. ibid. p. 309.

his cause, that it makes against him; since that form so worded carries in it a confession of the three divine persons being the one true God of christians: and if the creed in the first age contained no more; then that very doctrine must have been looked upon, from the beginning, as the sum and substance of christianity.

As to the question about the length of the apostolical creeds, or the number of articles they contained, learned men may offer their conjectures, and have done it^a: but perhaps, after all, we have not sufficient light to determine any thing with certainty. What I at present apprehend of that matter, I shall express distinctly, in the particulars here following. 1. It appears to me not improbable, that the earliest creeds, as they took their rise from the form of baptism, contained little or nothing beyond it. There is a short creed of that kind still extant in Cyril^b, comprehending but one single article, besides the article of the Trinity. And I may observe, that the shorter form of the Roman creed, (called the Apostle's) published by Usher^c, seems

to

- ^a See Critical History of the Creed, p. 33, &c.
 Grabe in Annotatis ad Bulli judic. C. 4, 5, 6.
 Bingham, Eccles. Antiq. L. x. C. iii. f. 7.
 Rogers's Review, &c. p. 261—271.
 Berriman's historical Account, &c. p. 21, &c.
 Buddei Isagoge, Vol. i. p. 441, &c.

^b Πιστεύω εἰς τὸν πατέρα, καὶ εἰς τὸν υἱόν, καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ εἰς ἡν βάπτισμα μετανόιας, Catech. Mystag. 1. N. 6.

^c Usher de Symbolis, p. 6, 9.

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to carry some marks of its having been formerly shorter, by its bringing in the article of the Holy Ghost in this abrupt manner *And in the Holy Ghost*: words which came in very aptly in the primitive form, when they immediately followed *and in the Son*; but which would appear abrupt, after several new insertions made between the two articles. Wherefore to salve that appearing abruptness, the church afterwards striking out *And*, inserted *I believe* in that place, making the article run, as it does at this day, *I believe in the Holy Ghost, &c.* This observable circumstance relating to that creed, is a confirmation of the opinion, that the first creeds (in some places at least) were of such a kind as Episcopius mentions. 2. It appears to me farther probable, that when the creeds ran in that short concise form, yet the interrogatories to and answers of the catechumens at baptism, were fuller and more explicit. Tertullian takes notice, that the responses in baptism were then somewhat larger than the model laid down by Christ^d, meaning, than the form of baptism; and he refers the enlargement of the responses to immemorial custom or tradition. Firmilian of the third century, speaks of the symbol^e, or creed of the Trinity, and of the prescribed ecclesiastical

^d Dehinc ter mergitamar, amplius aliquid respondentes quam dominus in evangelio determinavit. Tertull. de Coron. C. iii. p. 102.

^e Cui nec symbolum Trinitatis, nec interrogatio legitima et ecclesiastica defuit, Cyprian Opp. Ep. 75. p. 223.

clesiastical interrogation, and seems to make them distinct, supposing that the symbol of the Trinity contained less than the other. But if the whole ran under the name of the creed of the Trinity, even that shews what was looked upon as the principal thing in the creed, giving denomination to the whole: and it affords a probable argument, that, at first, the whole was comprised in it. 3. It is not unlikely, that some of the additional articles might have been inserted into the creeds, in the very age of the apostles, in opposition to the heresies then breaking out. This hypothesis appears to me much more probable, than that such articles should be inserted in opposition to paganism, or judaism. It was needless to caution the new converts against paganism, or judaism, which they had formally renounced: but it might be necessary to guard them against false christians, who pretended to follow the same rule of faith, and to admit the same scriptures. This supposition much better accounts for the article of *Maker of heaven and earth*, being so long omitted in the Roman creed (perhaps for six or seven centuries) though it was inserted in other creeds, where heresies gave occasion for it^f. And this also best accounts for the observable variety in the additional articles to the ancient creeds: because the several churches adopted those articles which suited

^f See Critical History of the Apostles Creed, p. 96.—106.

suit their then present circumstances, according as they found the faith of Christ most endangered in this or that particular^g, by the heresies then and there reigning. I pretend not to propose this as certain fact, but as a probable, or the most probable opinion^h. The sum of the whole matter seems to be well and justly expressed by a celebrated writer, as follows: “Not long after the apostles days, and
 “ even in the apostolic age itself, several heresies sprung up in the church, subversive of
 “ the fundamentals of christianity: to prevent
 “ the malignant effects whereof, and to hinder such heretics from an undiscernible mixing themselves with the orthodox christians,
 “ as also to establish and strengthen the true
 “ believers in the necessary truths of the Christian religion, the christian verities opposite
 “ to those heresies were inserted in the creed;
 “ and together with other articles, which had
 “ without intermission been constantly used from
 “ the time of the apostles, were proposed to the
 “ assent

^g See my Sermons, p. 324, &c.

Critical History of the Athanasian Creed, page 158, alias page 285.

^h Proxime illi citra controversiam ad verum accedunt, qui symbolum hocce (Romanum) ex solemnī baptismi formulā, quā baptizandi se credere profitebantur, in Deum Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum, enatum existimant; ita quidem, ut subinde additamenta quædam, hæreticorum, qui ecclesiam turbabant, erroribus opposita adjicerentur, donec in eam, quā hodie conspicitur, formam exurgeret, Buddei Isagog. Vol. i. p. 443. Conf. Witius in Symb. Apost. p. 7.

“ assent and belief of all persons who came to be
“ baptized^a.”

Now, to return to the doctrine of the Trinity, it is very certain, that that always made either the whole, or the principal part of the first creeds: and therefore in every view, and upon all hypotheses, it must have been looked upon as a prime verity, a fundamental doctrine of christianity. But it may be pleaded perhaps (as indeed it has been pleaded of old time^b, as well as since) that the ancient creeds are not explicit as to the doctrine of the Trinity, in the commonly received sense. To which the answer, in short, is this: that though all the ancient creeds are not equally explicit in that doctrine (and good reasons may be assigned why they are not) yet even those which are least explicit, do however contain the main doctrine briefly wrapped up, provided they are but interpreted according to the real meaning and intent of the compilers, as they ought to be.

I. I say, first, that all the ancient creeds are not equally explicit; for which good reasons may be assigned, as shall be seen presently. Some of the early creeds are very full and explicit in the doctrine, considering the time when they were made, long before the trinitarian controversy was come to any such height as it
grew

^a Critical History of the Apostles Creed, p. 38.

^b See Austin de Fide et Symbolo, C. i. p. 151. Tom. vi. Bened. edit.

Fulgentius in Fragment. 36, p. 632. Edit. Paris.

grew up to afterwards. The creed of Jerusalem preserved by Cyril, (the most^a ancient perhaps of any now extant) is very exprefs for the divinity of God the Son, in these words: “And in
“one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son
“of God, true God begotten of the Father be-
“fore all ages; by whom all things were made^b.” Expressions which seem directly pointed at the Cerinthians, and others, who in the earliest times opposed the divinity of Christ^c.

There is a creed, or fragment of a creed, in Irenæus, which plainly enough intimates the real and proper divinity both of the Son and Holy Ghost. I shall cite such parts of it as are most to our purpose. “There is one God omni-
“potent, who made all things (out of nothing)
“by his word—not by angels or by powers se-
“parate from his own mind; for the God of all
“needs nothing, but by his own word and spirit,
“makes, orders, and governs all things, and
“gives being to all^d.” Here the reader will observe, that the Word and Spirit, the Son and the Holy Ghost are manifestly distinguished from all

^a Bull. Judic. Eccles. C. vi. No. 5. p. 325.

Toutée. in Cyrill. Hierosol. p. 82.

^b Καὶ εἰς ἑνὰ κυρίον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν υἱὸν τῷ θεῷ μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα θεὸν ἀληθινὸν πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων. δι’ ἃ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. Cyril. Hierosol. p. 159. Conf. 114, 137, 149.

^c Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. vi. N. 16. p. 330.

^d Unus Deus omnipotens qui omnia condidit per verbum suum—non per angelos, neque per virtutes abscissas ab ejus sententiâ; nihil enim indiget omnium Deus: sed per Verbum et Spiritum suum omnia faciens, et disponens, et gubernans, et omnibus esse præstans, Iren. L. i. C. xxii. p. 98. Bened. edit.

all creatures, from all the things made: and it is the known doctrine of Irenæus, that the Word and Spirit are the very self of the Father^p in a qualified sense, reckoned to him, included in him. But let the reader, who desires fuller satisfaction, take along with him Mr.^q Alexander's excellent observations upon this and two or three more the like places of Irenæus, and he will find how strong an attestation they amount to, to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity, as now received, was then looked upon as the summary and ground work of all that christians believed. There is another creed of Irenæus, wherein the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of God incarnate, is expressed in strong terms. "Christum Jesum Dei Filium: qui propter eminentissimam erga figmentum suum dilectionem, eam quæ esset ex virgine generationem sustinuit, ipse per se hominem adunans Deo, &c." Iren. L. iii. C. 4.

There is a like creed in Tertullian, fully expressing the divinity of God the Son, and obliquely intimating the divinity of the Holy Ghost; which however is known to be Tertullian's express doctrine elsewhere, in more places than one^r. His creed runs thus.

"We

^p Fecit ea per semetipsum, hoc est, per Verbum et Sapientiam suam: adest enim ei semper Verbum et Sapientia, filius et spiritus, per quos, et in quibus, omnia libere et sponte fecit, p. 253.

Fecit ea per semetipsum, hoc est per Verbum et Sapientiam suam, p. 163.

^q Alexander's Essay on Irenæus, p. 19. Printed for J. Clark and R. Hett, 1727.

^r Tertul. contr. Prax. C. ix, xiii, xxx.

“ We believe in one God, but under this dispensation, which we call the œconomy, that the one God hath a Son, which is his Word, who proceeded from him, by whom all things were made. He was sent from the Father to the virgin, and was born of her, both God and man, Son of man, and Son of God—who afterwards, according to his promise, sent from the Father the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is the rule which has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel.”

In the next century, we have the famous creed of Gregory Bishop of Neocæsarea, commonly called Thaumaturgus, on the account of the many miracles which God wrought by him. The creed is as express and explicit as possible for the doctrine of the Trinity, drawn up probably for the obviating all extremes of that time, whether of Samosatenians, or Sabellians. Some have questioned the genuineness of it, but without sufficient

* Unicum quidem Deum credimus, sub hac tamen dispensatione, quam *οἰκονομίαν* dicimus, ut unici Dei sit et Filius, Sermo ipseus, qui ex ipso processerit, per quem omnia facta sunt, et sine quo factum est nihil. Hunc missum a Patre in virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et Deum, filium hominis et filium Dei, et cognominatum Jesum Christum.—Qui exinde miserit, secundum promissionem suam, a Patre Spiritum Sanctum, paracletum, sanctificatorem fidei eorum qui credunt in Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum. Hanc regulam ab initio evangelii decucurrisse, &c. Tert. adv. Prax. C. 2. p. 5, 6. Welchman edit.

sufficient cause^a. I shall here set it down at full length, as follows :

“ There is one God, Father of the living
 “ Word, the substantial wisdom, and power, and
 “ eternal express image: perfect parent of one
 “ perfect, Father of the only begotten Son.
 “ There is one Lord, one of one, God of God,
 “ the express character and image of the God-
 “ head, the effective Word, the Wisdom that
 “ grasps the system of the universe, and the
 “ power that made every creature, true Son of
 “ the true Father, invisible of invisible, incor-
 “ ruptible of incorruptible, immortal of im-
 “ mortal, and eternal of eternal. And there is
 “ one Holy Ghost, having his subsistence from
 “ God, and shining forth by the Son, [viz. to
 “ mankind] perfect image of the perfect Son,
 “ life causal of all living, the holy fountain, ef-
 “ fential sanctity, author of all sanctification: in
 “ whom God the Father is manifested, who is
 “ above all, and in all, and God the Son who
 “ is through all. A perfect Trinity, undivided,
 “ unseparated in glory, eternity and dominion.
 “ There is therefore nothing created or servile
 “ in this Trinity, nothing adventitious, that once
 “ was not, and came in after: for the Father
 “ was never without the Son, nor the Son with-
 “ out

^a The genuineness of the Creed is maintained by Bishop Bull, Defen. F. N. sect. ii. C. 12. p. 137.

Fabricius B. Gr. Vol. v. p. 249. opp. Hippol. Vol ii p. 224.

Dr. Berriman's Historical Account, p. 138, &c.

Mr. Abr. Taylor, True Script. Doctrine, p. 128, &c.

“out the Spirit, but this Trinity abides the same, unchangeable and invariable for ever.” This is the so much celebrated creed, of which some stories have been told more than we are bound to believe, by Gregory Nyssen: but misreport in circumstances do not invalidate the main thing. I have enclosed a small part of it within brackets, looking upon it as a marginal gloss, made by some ignorant sciolist, and afterwards foisted into the text. I owe the observation to Le Quien, who has confirmed it with substantial reasons^u, in his edition of Damascen.

If it should now be asked, why other creeds, elder than this, should not be equally explicit, as to the doctrine of the Trinity, or why the western formularies were not as minute and express, as some of the eastern; the answer is short and easy: there was not the same occasion. Heresies were more or less prevalent at

^u Εἰς θεός, πατήρ λόγος ζῶντος, σοφίας ἐφισώσης, καὶ δυνάμεως, καὶ χαρακτηρὸς αἰδίου· τέλειος τελείῳ γεννήτωρ, πατήρ υἱὸς μονογενὴς, εἰς κύριος, μόνος ἐκ μόνου, θεὸς ἐκ θεῶ· ὁ χαρακτηρ καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς θεότητος, λόγος ἐνεργῆς, σοφία τῆς τῶν ὅμων συστάσεως περιεκτικῆ, καὶ δυνάμεις τῆς ὅλης κτίσεως ποιητικῆ, υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς ἀληθινῷ πατρὶ, ἀόρατος ἀοράτῃ, καὶ ἀφθαρτος ἀφθάρτῃ, καὶ ἀθάνατος ἀθανάτῃ, καὶ αἰδῖος αἰδῖος. Καὶ ἐν πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἐκ θεῶ τὴν ὑπαρξίν ἔχον, καὶ δι' υἱὸν πεφηνῶς, [δηλαδὴ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις] εἰκὼν τῷ υἱῷ τελείῳ τελεία, ζωὴ ζώντων αἰτία, πηγὴ ἀγία, ἀγιότης ἀγιασμὸν χορηγὸς, ἐν ᾧ φανεῖται θεὸς ὁ πατήρ ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσι καὶ θεὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὁ διὰ πάντων. Τριὰς τελεία, δύξη καὶ αἰδιότης καὶ βασιλεία μὴ μερίζομένη μηδὲ ἀπαλλοτριουμένη· ὅτε ἐν κτιστὸν τι ἢ δῶλον ἐν τῇ τριάδι, ὅτε ἐπέσакτόν τι, ὡς πρότερον μὲν ἔχ' ἰπάρχον, ὕστερον δὲ ἐπεισελθόν. ὅτε ἐν ἐνελίπέ ποτε υἱὸς πατρὶ, ὅτε υἱὸν πνεῦμα, ἀλλ' ἀτρεπτος καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος ἡ αὐτὴ τριὰς αἰεί.

Gregor. Thaumaturgi symbolum apud Gregor. Nyssen. in vit. Gregor. opp. Tom. ii. p. 978, 979.

^w Mich. le Quien, in Dissertat. Damascen. Tom. i. p. 2.

at different times, and in different places: and creeds varied accordingly. The east was more infested with them, than the west: and therefore the eastern creeds were larger and more explicit, generally, than the western. And when some churches had formed their creeds, and made it customary for the catechumens to recite them publicly, they might not afterwards think it proper to alter the forms which the people had long been used, without the greatest necessity. Such is Ruffinus's account of this matter*. And I may add, that there was no absolute necessity of enlarging the baptismal creeds as often as heresies arose in the church; because the defects of the shorter creeds might be competently supplied another way; namely, by very particular instructions and cautions given to the candidates for baptism, in the catechetical lectures contrived for that purpose: of which I have treated sufficiently elsewhere†, and need not here repeat.

2. But I am further to observe, that even those shorter creeds, such particularly as the Roman,

* In diversis ecclesiis, aliqua in his verbis inveniuntur adjecta: in ecclesiâ tamen urbis Romæ hoc non deprehenditur factum. Quod ego propterea esse arbitror, quod neque hæresis ulla illic sumit exordium; et mos ibi servatur antiquus, eos qui gratiam baptismi susceperunt sunt, publicè, id est, fidelium populo audienti symbolum reddere, et utique adjectionem unius saltem sermonis eorum qui processerunt in fide non admittit auditus. In cæteris autem locis, quantum intelligi datur, propter nonnullos hæreticos addita quædam videntur, per quæ novellæ doctrinæ sensus crederetur excludi. Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 17. Edit. Ox.

Conf. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 312.

† Sermons, p. 322, &c.

Roman, though not so explicit in the article of the Trinity as the eastern creeds, do yet contain the sum and substance of the doctrine in full and strong terms; provided only, that they be interpreted according to the true and certain meaning of the compilers, as they ought to be. The creeds of the church ought most certainly to be interpreted according to the mind of the church, and not by any after thoughts of heretics^z. For though the scripture, properly, is the rule for receiving any creed, or any doctrine, yet it is not the rule of interpretation; but words, phrases and formularies must be interpreted according to their received use, and the known sense of the compilers and imposers^a. The very judicious author of the Critical history has expressed the same sentiments very fully and clearly, as follows: “ Although nothing contained there-
 “ in, must be believed any farther than it
 “ agrees with the holy scriptures, yet the in-
 “ tended sense of the greatest part thereof is not
 “ to be fetched from thence, but from the wri-
 “ tings of the fathers, and from those heresies
 “ against whom it (the creed) was designed:
 “ which

^z Quid refert si quis hesternus hæreticus verba aliter explicari posse contendat? Symbola certe ecclesiæ ex ipso ecclesiæ sensu, non ex hæreticorum cerebello exponenda sint. Quod posterius si fieret, Deum immortalem! quam cito, ex omnibus fidei nostræ articulis, ne unus quidem nobis satis sanus atque integer relinqueretur. Symbola ecclesiæ non tenet qui aliter quam ecclesia intelligit. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 322.

^a See the case of Arian subscription considered, p. 19, 20.

Remarks on Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Catechism, p. 25. Edit. 3d.

“ which expression may, at the first hearing,
 “ be perhaps esteemed by some too hasty and in-
 “ considerate: but the nature of the thing, well
 “ reflected on, makes it evident and beyond con-
 “ tradiction. And if the authority of others
 “ before me will be more valued, and better re-
 “ ceived, it will be no difficult task to produce
 “ several who have affirmed the same thing.
 “ But at present, I shall content myself with the
 “ testimony of Monsieur Jurieu, a French divine
 “ now living, who writes in express terms, that
 “ for his part, he is persuaded, that we must not
 “ seek the sense of the articles of the apostles
 “ creed in the scriptures, but in the intention of
 “ those that composed it^a.”

From what has been said, it ought to be
 admitted as a clear case, or a ruled point
 that the creeds of the church should be inter-
 preted according to the mind of the church;
 and the mind of the church is to be learned
 chiefly from the writings of the fathers. And
 while we proceed by this rule, it is manifest
 that the ancient creeds, whether of the larger
 or shorter kind, do express the doctrine of
 the Trinity, as commonly received at this day.
 The Roman creed for instance, even in its
 shorter form, (as it stood in and before the
 fourth century) fully expresses the true and
 proper divinity of Christ; indirectly, in call-
 ing the first person Father, and directly in
 calling

^a Critical History of the Apostle's Creed, p. 42. Edit. 4th.

calling the second person **Only Son**. The very name of Father, applied in the creed to the first person, intimates the relation he bears to a Son, of the same nature with him, existing of him, and from him and with him. This is an observation frequently occurring in the postnicene writers, who derived it from the more early fathers, as I shall make appear presently. Fulgentius argues, that the divinity of the Son is sufficiently intimated in the creed, by the first article's acknowledging God to be Father; inasmuch as Father and Son must be allowed to be of the same nature, and equal in all essential perfections^a. Ruffinus, before him, argues in like manner, and so interprets the first article of the creed^b. Hilary, before them both, expresses the same thought more than once, and insists upon it as of great weight^c. The Greek writers are full

^a Cum enim quisque se dicet credere in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, hoc ipsum quod in Deum Patrem dicit, sicut in eo veritatem naturalis divinitatis, ita veritatem naturalis quoque paternitatis, et ex hac veritatem etiam naturalis generationis ostendit. — Totum igitur in se habet illa generatio divina quicquid in se habet Dei Patris æterna substantia. Proinde sufficiebat ut diceretur de Patre solo, quicquid æqualiter intelligendum esset de Filio: Pater enim sic omnipotentem filium genuit, sicut est ipse Pater omnipotens. — Omnia igitur quæ Deo Patri dantur in symbolo, ipso uno filii nomine, naturaliter tribuuntur et filio.

Fulgent Fragment. xxxvi. p. 652.

^b Patrem cum audis, filii intellige Patrem, qui filius supradictæ sit imago substantiæ. — Hoc ergo ipso nomine quo Deus ipse Pater appellatur, cum Patre pariter subsistere etiam filius demonstratur. — Est ergo Deus Pater verus tanquam veritatis Pater, non extrinsecus creans, sed ex eo quod ipse est, filium generans, &c. Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 18. Ed. Ox.

^c Cum Patris nomen auditur, nunquid natura filii non continetur in nomine? — neque enim filius est cui alia ac dissimilis erit
a Patre

full of the same notion, asserting God to be a Father, and from that principle inferring the co-equality and proper divinity of Christ his Son. Gregory Nyssen, in his first oration against Eunomius, expresses the thing thus^d: “ He says, there
 “ is one only God Almighty: if he means a
 “ Father under the name of Almighty, he says
 “ the same that we do, and nothing different;
 “ but if he intends it of an Almighty who is not
 “ a Father, he may preach up circumcision if he
 “ pleases, along with his other Jewish tenets.
 “ The faith of christians looks to a Father. The
 “ Father indeed is all; he is most High, Al-
 “ mighty, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords:
 “ whatever titles sound high or great, they be-
 “ long to the Father; and all things that are
 “ the Father’s belong to the Son. Allow but
 “ this and we admit the other.” To the same
 purpose

a Patre substantia, Hilar. de Trin. p. 789. Ecclesiæ fides solum verum Deum Patrem confessa, consistitur et Christum.— Per id enim Christum confessa Deum verum est, quod solum verum Deum confessa sit Patrem.— Non enim unigenito Deo naturæ demutationem naturalis nativitas intulit: nec qui ex subsistente Deo secundum divinæ generationis naturam Deus subsistit, ab eo qui solus verus Deus est, separabilis est veritate naturæ, p. 1006. Conf. 860, 938, 1163. Ed. Benedict.

^d Εἷς γάρ ἐστι, φησὶ, γαὶ μόνος θεὸς παντοκράτωρ. εἰ μὲν ἔν τὸν πατέρα διὰ τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος προσηγορίας ἐνδείκνυται, ἡμετερον λέγει τὸν λόγον, καὶ ἢ ἀλλότριον· εἰ δὲ ἄλλον τινα παρὰ τὸν πατέρα νοεῖ παντοκράτορα, καὶ τὴν περιτομὴν εἰ δοκεῖ κηρυσσέτω, ὃ τῶν δογμάτων τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν προσάτης· τῶν γὰρ χριστιανῶν ἡ πίστις πρὸς τὸν πατέρα βλέπει. Πάντα δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ πατήρ· ὑψίστος, παντοκράτωρ, βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων, κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων, καὶ πάντα ὅσα τῆς ὑψηλῆς ἔχεται σημασίας, τῷ πατρὶ ἐστὶν ἴδια· τὰ δὲ τῷ πατρὶ τῷ υἱῷ ἐστὶ πάντα ὥς τε τέττε ὄντος, κακεῖνα δεχόμεθα, κ. τ. λ. Gregor. Nyssen. Orat. i. p. 15.

purpose speaks Athanasius, that the professing our belief in God, as a Father, is at the same time acknowledging the divinity of the Son^g. And the like is observed by Cyril of Jerusalem in his exposition of the first article of the creed^h.

The authors which I have cited, and to which more might be addedⁱ, are all post-nicenes, but they very well understood the true and genuine principles of their catholic predecessors, and are so many presumptive evidences of the doctrine of the antenicens church, when, though writing on different occasions, and in distant places, they fall in so unanimously with the same way of thinking. Besides, testimonies may be cited from the antinicens writers themselves, expressing the same notion. Dionysius of Alexandria, who flourished about the middle of the third century, intimates the same thing thus: “The Father being eternal, the Son must be eternal too, Light of Light.—The names by me mentioned are undivided and inseparable: when I named the Father, before I mentioned the Son, I signified the Son in the Father.—If any of my false accusers
“fers

^g Ὁ δὲ τὸν θεὸν πατέρα λέγων, εὐθὺς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν υἱὸν σημαίνει, καὶ ἐκ ἀγνοήσει ὅτι υἱὸς ὄντος, διὰ τῆς υἱότητος γινόμενα ἐκτίσθη πάντα. Athanas. de Decret. Synod. Nic. p. 236. Benedict.

^h Πατέρα τὸν θεόν, ὀνομάσαμεν, ἵνα ἅμα τῷ νοεῖν πατέρα, νόησωμεν καὶ τὸν υἱόν· υἱὸς γὰρ καὶ πατὴρ ἐστὶν ὁ αὐτὸς ἐν μετὰ τῶν ὄντων. Cyril. Hierosol. Catech. vii. N. 3. cont. Catch. viii. N. 1.

ⁱ See others cited, and referred to in the Critical History of the Apostle's Creed, p. 77, 78.

“fers suspect, that because I called God creator
 “and former of all things, I made him creator
 “of Christ, let him consider, that I before stiled
 “him Father, and so the Son was included in
 “Him^a, &c.” Here we may observe, how this
 early and excellent writer argues from the very
 name and relation of Father, that Christ could
 not be a creature, in like manner as the post-
 nicene writers (before cited) argue from the same
 title applied to the first person in the creed. So
 that if we interpret the creed according to the
 strict sense which the ancients had of the term
 Father, that very title indirectly asserts the divinity
 of Christ, since God is thereby understood to be
 the Father of Christ^b, and not his creator, as of
 angels or men.

But the same thing will be more directly
 proved from the title of Son, or only Son ap-
 plied to the second person of the Trinity, in
 the creed: for all the fathers, both antenicene
 and postnicene, constantly understood that title
 as applied to Christ, to be expressive of his real
 and proper divinity, of his partaking of the
 same

^a Ὅμοιος ἔν αἰώνίῳ τῷ πατρὶ, αἰώνιος ὁ υἱός ἐστι, ὡς ἐκ φωτὸς ἀνι-
 —τῶν ὑπ’ ἐμὲ λεχθέντων ὀνομάτων ἕκαστον ἀχώριστόν ἐστι καὶ ἀδιαιρέ-
 —τον τῷ πλῆσιον. Πατέρα εἶπον, καὶ πρὶν ἐπαγάγω τὸν υἱὸν ἐσήμανα
 καὶ τῷτον ἐν τῷ πατρί.—Ἐὰν δέ τις τῶν συκοφαντῶν ἐπειδὴ τῶν
 πάντων ποιητῶν τὸν θεὸν καὶ δημιουργὸν εἶπον, ζηταί με καὶ τῷ
 χριστῷ λέγειν, ἀκυσάτω μὲ πρότερον πατέρα φήσαντος αὐτὸν, ἐν ᾧ
 καὶ ὁ υἱὸς προσγέγραπται. Dionys. Alex. apud Anathas. de
 Sententia Dionysii. p. 254, 257.

^b Compare the Creed of Gregory Thaumaturgus, cited above,
 where the term Father is interpreted in the same high sense,
 and as implying the real and essential divinity of the Son.

same nature and godhead with the Father, whose only Son he is. Bishop Bull, in reply to Episcopius, has largely insisted upon this argument, proving that the title of *μονογευής*, only begotten, or only Son, in the creed, denotes the real and eternal divinity of Christ. He proves it, 1. From such places of scripture where that title is applied to Christ. 2. From the strict force and propriety of the expression itself. 3. From the order and texture of the creed. 4. From the universal and constant interpretation of the ancients^c. I may refer to Bishop Bull and others that have come after him, for proof that the title of Son of God, or only begotten Son, in scripture, cannot reasonably be understood either of our Lord's miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost, or of his Messiahship, or of his being the first begotten from the dead, or of his receiving all power, and his being *appointed Heir* of all things: none of these circumstances singly considered, nor all together, will be sufficient to account for the title of *only Son*, or *only Begotten*; but there is a necessity of looking higher up to the pre-existent and divine nature of the *Word*, who was in the

^c In symbolo Romano Christum dici Dei Filium unicum, sive unigenitum (τὸν μονογευήν) respectu divinæ suæ naturæ, qua non modo ante Mariam, sed etiam ante omnia sæcula ex et cum Deo Patre extitit probatu facile est: 1. Ex locis scripturæ ubi vox *μονογευής* reperitur Christo tributa. 2. Ex vi et proprietate ipsius vocis. 3. Ex ordine et contextu verborum in symbolo ipso. 4. Denique ex constante ac perpetuo Catholicæ Ecclesiæ sensu atque interpretatione. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 313.

the beginning *with God*, and was himself *very God*, before the creation, and from all eternity^d. Angels and men have been called Sons of God, in an improper and metaphorical sense; but they have never been stiled only begotten, nor indeed sons in any such emphatical and distinguishing manner as Christ is. They are sons by adoption, or faint resemblance: He is truly, properly and eminently Son of God, and therefore God, as every son of man is therefore truly man^e. Novatian speaks the sense of all the antenicene fathers in that article: I forbear to produce their testimonies here, having done it elsewhere^f: there is not a more noted principle or maxim among the earliest writers of the church than this, that Christ is truly, properly, essentially God, because he is properly Son of God. The sum then is, that the apostles creed, in stiling Christ *only Son*, or *only begotten*, has expressed his coeternal divinity in such terms as were constantly, and universally understood by the ancient churches to carry that idea with them. Therefore

^d See Bull. Judic. C. v. p. 313.—320.

Dr. Sherlock's Scripture Proofs of our Saviour's Divinity,
p. 161.—183.

Remarks on Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Catechism,
p. 44.—48.

^e Ut enim præscripsit ipsa natura hominem credendum esse, qui ex homine fit; ita eadem natura præscribit et Deum credendum esse, qui ex Deo fit: ne si non et Deus fuerit cum ex Deo fit, jam nec homo fit licet ex homine fuerit, Novat. C. xi. p. 34, Edit. Welchm.

^f Sermons, p. 329.

fore the very learned Bishop Stillingfleet had good reason to say, "That although the Apostles creed does not in express words declare the divinity of the three persons in the unity of the divine essence; yet taking the sense of those articles as the christian church understood them from the apostles times, then we have as full and clear evidence of this doctrine, as we have that we received the scriptures from them^s." The result of what has been said under the present article, is, that whether we take the longer or the shorter creeds of the ancient churches, whether those that are most explicit or those that are least so, all of them contained the doctrine of the Trinity, either as their whole subject matter, or as their principal part: and therefore so far as the creeds of the ancient church can be of use to shew that any point of doctrine was judged important, or fundamental, we have full proof that the doctrine we are speaking of, was looked upon as an essential of christianity in the best and purest ages.

It must indeed be owned, that it never was the intention of creeds to furnish out any compleat catalogue of fundamentals^h, and so it would be very wrong to argue and infer negatively, that such an article was not in this or in that creed, and therefore was not judged a
fundamental

^s Stillingfleet on the Trinity, C. ix. p. 229.

^h See my Sermons, p. 321.—326.

Critical History of the Athanasian Creed, p. 285, &c.
second Edit.

fundamental by the compilers (for by that rule, neither the article of God's being *Maker of heaven and earth*, nor that of *Life everlasting* would be fundamental, having both been omitted in the old Roman creed) but it may be right enough to argue and infer positively, that such an article was inserted in the creeds, and was therefore judged to be fundamental, or of great importance; since none could be admitted to christian baptism, in such or such places, in the early times, without an open and explicit profession of it. So much for the head of creeds.

II. Another way of knowing the sentiments of the ancient church, in relation to the necessity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, is to observe what censures were passed upon the open impugnors of it. For, if it was accounted heresy, pernicious and deadly heresy, to oppose that doctrine, in whole or in part, then it is plain, that the doctrine was judged important, was looked upon as an essential of the gospel faith. Among the impugnors of that doctrine, in the article of Christ's divinity, have been commonly reckoned these seven. 1. Cerinthus, 2. Ebion, 3. Theodotus, 4. Artemon, 5. Beryllus, 6. Paul of Samosata, 7. Arius. Of whom I shall treat in their order, as briefly as may be consistent with perspicuity.

A. D. 60. *Cerinthus*.

Cerinthus lived in the apostolic age, was an impugner of our Lord's divinity, and was condemned for it, probably, by St. John himself, and by the whole church at that time and after: therefore the article of Christ's divinity was then looked upon as a fundamental article. This is the sum of what I maintain under this head: I now come to the distinct proof of the several particulars.

1. That Cerinthus lived in the apostolic age, is a fact so well attested by great variety of ancient evidences, (some of which will come up presently) that it ought to pass for a certain and manifest truth. Yet a late learned foreignerⁱ, having a private hypothesis to serve, has called the fact in question, as some few others besides him have done^k. His reasons have been considered, and answered by learned hands^l; to whom I refer the reader, rather than enter into a needless dispute. Irenæus is an authority so early, and so express for Cerinthus's^m flourishing in St. John's time, that it is alone sufficient to remove all doubt of the fact. Indeed Epiphaniusⁿ and Philastrius

ⁱ Frideric, Adolph. Lampe. in Comment. in S. Johan. Proleg. L. ii. C. 3. p. 181, &c.

^k Vid. Buddeus in Eccles. Apost. p. 411.

^l Taylor's true Scripture Doctrine, p. 263.

Buddeus Eccl. Apostol. p. 412.—419.

^m Irenæus, L. iii. C. 3. 11.

ⁿ Epiphan. Hæres. xxviii. N. 2. p. 111.

Philastrius^o place Cerinthus so high in the apostolic age, that they suppose him to have given great disturbance to St. Peter and St. Paul, and to have occasioned the calling of the first council at Jerusalem, A. D. 49. recorded in the Acts^p. But there is reason to suspect the truth of that report^q, and therefore I am content to place Cerinthus some years lower, but early enough to have spread his heresies before St. John wrote his epistles, and even before St. Paul wrote some of his.

2. Cerinthus held many errors: but the only one I am concerned to take notice of, is his denying the divinity of Christ. That he did so, is plainly asserted by the ancient author of the Appendix to Tertullian's book of Prescription^r. But Irenæus, a more early, and a more accurate writer, will give us the truest and most distinct account of what Cerinthus held with respect to the divinity of our blessed Lord. The sum of his heresy in that point was, that Jesus, and Christ were two persons: Jesus a mere man conceived in the natural way, of Joseph and Mary; and Christ a celestial spirit, which descended from above, and resided in the man Jesus, not constantly, but occasionally, from his baptism to his crucifixion.

^o Philastr. Hæres. xxxvi. p. 80. Edit. Fabric.

^p Acts v.

^q Vid. Buddeus Eccles. Apostol. p. 113, 196.

^r Cerinthus—Christum ex semine Joseph natum proponit, hominem illum tantummodo sine divinitate contendens. Tertul. de Præscript. C. lxxviii. p. 221. Rigalt.

crucifixion¹. Whatever view we take this doctrine of Cerinthus in, it is denying the proper divinity of our blessed Lord. The man Jesus, upon his principles, could not be divine at all, having no constant, or personal union with what descended from above: and as to that spiritual substance, called Christ, which was supposed, some time, to reside in him, even that was not properly divine, according to Cerinthus. The most that he said of it was, that it was spiritual, and impassible because spiritual: he does not say, because divine. He separates him from the principality that is over all, that is to say, from God supreme, and therefore could not look upon him as properly divine. I may further observe, that his doctrine of the Logos, or Word, was, that he was Son, not of God supreme, but of the only begotten², one remove still farther off from God most high. And since he thus distinguished him from the only begotten, who was alone supposed to know the Father immediately, it is plain he could not look upon the Word as strictly divine. Add to this, that

¹ Cerinthus autem quidam in Asiâ——Jesum subjecit, non ex virgine natum (impossibile enim hoc ei visum est) fuisse autem eum Joseph et Mariæ filium, similiter ut reliqui omnes homines, et plus potuisse justitiâ et prudentiâ et sapientiâ ab hominibus: et post baptismum descendisse in eum, ab eâ principauté quæ est super omnia, Christum figurâ columbæ, et tunc annuntiassse incognitum Patrem, et virtutes perfecisse: in fine autem revolasse iterum Christum de Jesu, et Jesum passum esse et resurrexisse, Christum autem impassibilem perseverasse, existentem spiritualem. Iren. L. i. C. 26. p. 105. Bened. Conf. Epiph. Hæres. xxviii. p. 110.

² Et initium quidem esse Monogenem, Logon autem verum filium unigeniti. Iren. L. iii. C. 11. p. 188.

that Epiphanius speaking of some of the Ebionites (who were near allied to the Cerinthians, and borrowed much of their doctrine from them) says, that they supposed their Christ to have descended from heaven, being a Spirit first created of all, higher than the angels, and bearing rule over all; which afterwards assumed a body". This description of Christ from above, seems to answer pretty nearly to Cerinthus's notion of a spiritual substance, called Christ, so descending and residing in Jesus; and is a confirmation of what I am pleading for, viz. That Cerinthus did not look upon Christ as divine (in any capacity) but as a creature only. So then, whether we consider Cerinthus as making Jesus a mere man, or as supposing the Christ (sometimes residing in Jesus) to be an inferior æon, produced in time, and the offspring of silence", or in short, a creature; either way he plainly impugned the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ.

3. The next thing to be considered is, what kind of reception such his doctrine met with in the church of Christ. We have good reason to believe, that it was condemned as anti-christian doctrine, by the bishops of Asia, and
by

" Ἄλλοι δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς λέγουσιν αἰωθεὶν μὲν ὄντα, πρὸ πάντων δὲ κτισθέντα, πνεῦμα ὄντα, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀγγέλων ὄντα, πάντων τε κυριεύοντα, καὶ χριστὸν λέγεσθαι, τὸν ἐκείσε δὲ αἰῶνα κεκληρωῖσθαι. Epiphanius. Hæres. xxx. C. 3. p. 127. Conf. Vitranga. observat. Sacr. L. v. C. 12. f. 7. p. 146. Edit. ult.

" See Bishop Bull, Def. F. N. sect. iii. C. 1. p. 160, et Greg. Nazianz. orat xxiii. p. 414.—

by St. John himself. Indeed our proofs of this matter are of the conjectural kind: but they are not without their weight, if they amount to rational presumptions, or strong probabilities. If it can be probably argued from external evidence, that St. John wrote his gospel, or epistles, in direct opposition to the tenets of Cerinthus, and if the internal characters of his writings themselves confirm the report; then both these circumstances concurring in the same thing, will together amount to as fair a proof of what we pretend, as matters of this nature will generally admit of.

That St. John wrote his gospel with a view to confute Cerinthus, among other false teachers, is attested first by Irenæus*, who was a disciple of Polycarp, and who flourished within less than a century of St. John's time. He is very particular in the account, observ-

* Hanc fidem annuncians Joannes domini discipulus, volens per evangelii annunciationem auferre eum qui a Cerintho infirmatus erat hominibus errorem, et multo prius ab his qui dicuntur Nicolaitæ, qui sunt vulsio ejus, quæ falsò cognominatur scientia, ut confunderet eos, et suaderet, quoniam unus Deus qui omnia fecit per verbum suum: et non, quemadmodum illi dicunt, alterum quidem fabricatorem, alium autem Patrem Domini; et alium quidem fabricatoris Filium, alterum vero de superioribus Christum, quem et impassibilem perseverasse descendente in Jesum filium fabricatoris, et iterum revolasse in suum pleroma; et initium quidem esse Monogenem, Logon autem verum filium unigeniti; et eam conditionem, quæ est secundum nos, non a primo Deo factam, sed a virtute aliquâ valde deorsum subjectâ, et abscissâ ab eorum communicatione, quæ sunt invisibilia et in-nominabilia: omnia igitur talia circumscribere volens discipulus Domini, et regulam veritatis constituere in ecclesiâ,—sic inchoavit in câ, quæ est secundum evangelium, doctrinâ; in principio erat verbum, &c. Iren. L. iii. C. xi. p. 188.

ing what special errors of the same Cerinthus and others, the apostle had an eye to, in the penning of his gospel.

Our next author to Irenæus, is Victorinus Petavionensis, who flourished about A. D. 290. He reports that the bishops of Asia, being alarmed at the pernicious doctrines then disseminated by Valentinus, Cerinthus, and Ebion, came in a body to St. John, importuning him to bear his testimony against them^y. The author, probably, mistakes in bringing in Valentinus so early: but that will not invalidate his report as to the other two, or as to the main thing. Some doubts have been raised about the genuineness of that treatise ascribed to Victorinus: but Dr. Grabe seems to have well taken off the only material exception to it^z: to him therefore I refer the reader.

Our next author is Jerome, who twice tells the same story, with some particular circumstances, not so plainly intimated elsewhere; once in his prologue to his commentaries on St. Matthew^a, and again in his book of Ecclesiastical

^y Cum essent Valentinus, et Cerinthus, et Ebion, et cæteri scholæ satanæ diffusi per orbem, convenerunt ad illum de finitimis provinciis omnes, et compulerunt ut ipse testimonium scriberet. Victorin in Apocalypf. Bibl. PP. Tom. i. p. 576. alias Tom. iii. p. 418.

^z Grabe Spicileg. Vol. ii. p. 45.

^a Johannes apostolus et evangelista—quum esset in Asiâ, et jam tunc hæreticorum semina pullularent Cerinthi, Ebionis, et cæterorum qui negant Christum in carne venisse (quos et ipse in epistolâ suâ antichristos vocat, et apostolus Paulus frequenter percutit) coactus est ab omnibus pene tunc Asiæ episcopis, et multarum

fistical writers^b. He does not say, in particular, from whence he had his accounts: but he was a learned man, conversant in books, and he intimates that he had his intelligence from ecclesiastical memoirs.

Epiphanius of the same time, testifies more than once, that St. John wrote against Cerinthus and Ebion, who had taught that Christ was a mere man^c. It is some confirmation of this, what Irenæus relates of St. John's meeting with Cerinthus at the bath (as I have before noted) and running from him with disdain. It shews at least, that St. John and he were contemporaries, and that the apostle well understood his principles, and detested them.

The main of the account may receive some farther confirmation from what Julian, the apostate emperor

multarum ecclesiarum legationibus, de divinitate salvatoris altius scribere, et ad ipsam, ut ita dicam, Dei Verbum, non tam audaci, quam felici temeritate prorumpere. Et ecclesiastica narrat historia, quum a fratribus cogeretur ut scriberet, ita facturum se respondisse, si indistincto jejunio in commune omnes Deum precarentur: quo expleto, revelatione saturatus, in illud proœmium cœlo veniens eructavit: in principio erat verbum, &c. Hieronym. Prolog. in Matt. p. 3. opp. Tom. iv. Ed. Bened.

^b Joannes, novissimus omnium scripsit evangelium rogatus ab Asiæ episcopis, adversus Cerinthum aliosque hæreticos, et maxime tunc Ebionitarum dogma consurgens; qui asserunt Christum ante Mariam non fuisse: unde et compulsus est divinitatem ejus nativitatem edicere. Hieronym. de viris illustrib. C. ix. p. 54, 55. Fabric.

^c "Εἶθα γὰρ τὸν Χριστὸν ἐκ παρατριβῆς ψιλὸν Ἀνθρωπον ἐκέρυττειν ὁ Εὐβίαν καὶ ὁ Κήρυθος, καὶ οἱ ἄμφ' αὐτοῖς, φημί δὲ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, ἐκὲν τῷ σπέρματι τὸ ἅγιον ἀνέτειλε τῷ κόσμῳ ταύτην ἁγίαν βοτάνην, εἶπεν δ' ἄρρητον τῇ ἀποδιώξασαν τὸν ὄφιν, καὶ λύσασαν τὴν τῷ Διαβόλῳ τυραννίδα, ἐκὲν γὰρ ὁ ὁγιώτης Ἰωάννης, κ. τ. λ. Epiphani. Hæres. li. 2. p. 423. Conf. p. 424, 433, 435. Hæc. lix. p. 747.

emperor, was pleased to observe (thirty years or more before St. Jerome) that John perceiving how that the persuasion of Christ's being God, prevailed mightily among the christians dispersed thorough many cities of Greece and Italy, did then take upon him to assert the same doctrine in his gospel, with a view to humour them, and to get himself reputation^d. Here then we have a plain confession from a vehement adversary, which confession of his (ridicule and banter apart) amounts to this; that the generality of christians, as early as the apostolic age, were exceedingly zealous for the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and that St. John himself commended them for it, encouraging them in it, and wrote his gospel to confirm it. Julian, very probably, had learned it from incontestible monuments of antiquity; and since he could not disown the fact, he endeavoured, in his ludicrous way, to turn the whole into ridicule. He says nothing indeed of Cerinthus or Ebion, as he had no occasion: but yet this story of his, as he has told it, falls in with the other accounts in the main thing; for which reason I have mentioned it. Such is the external evidence we have to prove, that St. John, at the request of the bishops, and churches of that time, wrote his gospel to establish

^d Ὁ Χρῆστος Ἰωάννης αἰσθόμενος ἤδη, πολὺ πλῆθος ἐαλωκὸς ἐν πολλαῖς τῶν Ἑλληνίδων καὶ Ἰταλιωτίδων πόλεων ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς νόσε· ἀκούων δὲ, οἶμαι, καὶ τὰ μνήματα Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου, λῆθρα μὲν, ἀκούων δὲ ὅμως αὐτὰ θεραπευόμενα, πρῶτος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν [τὸν Ἰησοῦν θεόν] Julian apud Cyril. L. x. p. 327. Edit. Lips.

establish the faith of christians in our Lord's divinity, against Cerinthus and Ebion, or other false teachers who opposed it^e.

The truth of the fact will be much confirmed from the internal characters of St. John's writings: and this will fully appear by comparing his expressions with Cerinthus's tenets, observing, all the way, how aptly they answer in that respect, directly confronting and overturning the principles of that heresiarch and his followers.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD. That is to say, at the creation of all things (ἐν ἀρχῇ, as in Genesis) the word existed^f; therefore he was before any creature; not only before Joseph and Mary, but even before any such created æon as Cerinthus had talked of, whether called the Word, or Christ.

AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD. Not a separate æon, inferior to God and distant from God (like to what Cerinthus supposed of the Demiurgus, the maker and framer of the world^g) not estranged from God, but united to him,
and

^e The very learned Vitrिंगa has objected to this account, as to some circumstances. *Observ. Sacr. L. v. C. x. sect. 7, 8.* But he is well answered by Buddeus, *Eccl. Apostol. p. 419, &c.*

^f Δύναται μὲν τοιγε τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ὄνομα λαμβάνεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τῷ κόσμῳ ἀρχῆς, μαθητόντων ἡμῶν διὰ τῶν λεγομένων, ὅτι πρῶτος ὁ λόγος τῶν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γενομένων ἦν. Origen. *Comment. in Joan. p. 50.* Conf. Buddeus *Eccl. Apostol. p. 430, 438.* Bull. *Judic. Eccl. C. ii. f. 4. p. 294.*

^g Irenæus, *L. iii. C. xi. p. 188.* Lib. i. *C. xxvi. p. 105.* Pseudo Tertullian *de Præscript. Hæret. Append. p. 221.* Epiph. *Hæres. xxviii. N. p. 110.*

and abiding with him^h, while personally distinct from him.

AND THE WORD WAS GOD. Not a mere man, as Cerinthus asserted of Jesus, not a creature, as Cerinthus imagined of Christ, or of the Word, but *very God*ⁱ.

THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. This is resuming what had been said before after a kind of break, to connect it the more closely with the account of the creation (which the apostle was just going to mention) and to inculcate the more strongly, against Cerinthus, that he *by whom all things were made* was no distant, inferior æon, estranged from God, and unacquainted with him, but one that had been always with the supreme Father.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM. By the Word. Not by an inferior demiurgus, not by any separate powers, not by angels, (as the Cerinthians taught^k) not by any creature creator, but

^h Καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν· ὃ γὰρ ἐγένετο πρὸς τὸν θεόν· καὶ ταυτὸν ῥῆμα, τὸ ἦν, τὸ λόγος καταγορεύεται, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν, καὶ ὅτε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἦν, ὅτε τῆς ἀρχῆς χωριζόμενος, ὅτε τὸ πατρὸς ἀπολειπόμενος. Origin. in Joan. p. 44.

ⁱ Addit, et Deus erat Verbum; illud, non minus quam ipsum Patrem, verum summumque Deum esse significans. Atque istud quidem Cerinthi commentis e diametro est oppositum, quippe qui per τὸν λόγον, sive Christum, equidem substantiam quandam Spiritualem eamque humanā naturā præstantiorem, neutiquam autem ἰπόσασιν quandam divinam quæ et ipsa Deus esset, intelligebat. Buddei Eccles. Apostolica, p. 438.

^k Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 3. L. v. C. 9. Augustin de Hæres. C. viii.

Ephan. Hæres. 28. 1. Philastr. Hæres. 36. p. 77. Pseudo Tertullian. Præscript. C. 68. Damascen. Hæres. 28.

but the Word himself, very God, and one with God¹.

AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE. Not the lower world only, but the upper world also; not the material and visible world only, but the world of invisibles, the celestial spirits, angels and archangels. They also were made by the same Word; for there was nothing made without him^m. *By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for himⁿ.* So writes St. Paul, the best interpreter what we have in St. John, as writing by the same spirit, and with the same views, and probably against the very same men. Indeed, there is not in the whole New Testament any thing of a more sublime and exalted strain, concerning the personal dignity of our blessed Lord

¹ *Omnia per illud (Verbum) facta sunt*: commentis Cerinthianis est oppositum: non enim a fabricatore quodam mundi, a Deo primo diverso, sed a λόγῳ ὑποστατικῷ, qui et ipse verus summusque Deus sit, mundum huncce et omnia quæ in eo sunt, condita esse, verbis istis docet. Buddei Eccles. Apostol. p. 438. conf. Vitring. Observ. sacr. L. v. C. 13. f. 4. p. 155.

^m In eodem commate, contra eosdem hæreticos addit, *et absque eo factum est nihil*. Quæ verba, qui intentionem apostoli non attenderit, nihil aliud quam inanem ταυτολογίαν continere suspicetur. Sed nimirum hæretici isti (ut recte Grotius) alium volebant opificem eorum quæ cernimus, sive mundi hujus aspectabilis alios rerum invisibilium, et quæ super hunc mundum sunt, in suoque pleromate: nihil igitur eorum quæ facta sunt, ex operibus τοῦ λόγου excipit Joannes. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. ii. p. 204.

ⁿ Colof. i. 16. See my Sermons, p. 58—62.

Lord, than what we find in the first chapter to the Colossians, from the 15th to the 19th verse inclusive; and in the second, from verse the second to the tenth. Those passages come the nearest of any to St. John's divine proeme, and are only to be matched with it. It would be too great a digression here, to shew how those so emphatical expressions of St. Paul are all particularly fitted to confront the tenets of Cerinthus, as if chosen for that very purpose, and directly pointed at them: but the learned reader who is disposed to examine into the fact, may consult a very judicious foreigner, who has drawn that matter out at length, expounding what St. Paul has said in those two chapters, in a very clear and excellent manner, by the opposition which it carries in it all the way to the Cerinthian heresy^f. I return to St. John.

IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. The same Word was Life, the λόγος and ζωή, both one^g. There was no occasion therefore for subtilly distinguishing the Word and Life into two æons, as some did.

AND THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS COMETH NOT UPON IT^{||}. So I render the verse, conformable to the rendering

^f Buddeus Eccles. Apostolica. p. 468.—487.

^g Hunc ipsum λόγον esse vitam hominis; otiosam innuens illorum subtilitatem, qui in systemate divinarum emanationum, ζωήν vitam, a λόγῳ distinguebant, eidemque subordinabant. Vitringa in Prolog. Evangel. Johan. Observ. Sacr. L. v. C. 13. p. 180.

|| See Addenda. p. 505.

rendering of the same Greek verb, καταλαμβάνω, by our translators, in another place of this same gospel^h. The apostle, as I conceive, in this fifth verse of his first chapter, alludes to the prevailing error of the Gnostics, and of all that sort of menⁱ; who had adopted the ancient magian notion of a good God and evil God, the first called light, and the other darkness^{*}; which two they supposed to be under perpetual struggles, and obstructed by each other. In opposition, probably, to those magian principles, St. John here asserts, that the Word, the true Light, was much superior to any such pretended rival power. In him was no darkness at all^k: no such opposite power could come upon him, to obstruct his purposes, or defeat his good and great designs.

HE WAS IN THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD HAD BEEN MADE BY HIM, BUT THE WORLD KNEW HIM NOT. So I translate, for greater accuracy and perspicuity; HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. These two verses manifestly confront several of the gnostic principles, viz. that the world was made by an inferior and evil god; an angel called Demiurgus; and that Christ came into another person's work, or province, not into

^h John xii. 35. Vid. Bos. exercitat. in Johan. p. 54, 55.

ⁱ Vid. Vitringa Observat. Sacr. L. v. C. 13. p. 136. Epiphanius speaking of the gnosticism of those times, derives it in part from the perplexity which those men were under, in the question about the Origin of Evil. Epiph. Hæres. xxiv. 6.

^{*} See Addenda, p. 507.

^k God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 1 John i. 5.

into his own, when he manifested himself to the world^l; and that he did not so manifest himself before his incarnation. Those several errors seem to be directly pointed at, and confuted by what the evangelist has taught in those two verses^m. But of the true interpretation of those two verses, I have treated more largely elsewhereⁿ.

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, became personally united with the man Jesus; AND DWELT AMONG US, resided constantly in the human nature so assumed. Very emphatical and pointed expressions, searching to the root of every heresy almost of that time, so far as concerned the person of Christ: for none of them would admit the *Word made flesh*, or *God made man*^o. Such sentiments agreed not with their vain philosophy; they deemed

^l Scilicet Cerinthi et aliorum omnium hæreticorum, qui mundi hujus conditorem a summo Deo separabant, hæc fuit notissima sententia, Christum servatorem nostrum a summâ omnium principalitate in hunc mundum venisse tanquam in alienum opus; idque ut homines a Dominio et servitute conditoris universi in nescio quam libertatem (licentiam rectius dixeris) vindicaret. Bull. Judic. Eccles. C. ii. f. 4. p. 294. Conf. Iren. L. iii. C. 11. et L. v. C. 18.

^m Docet itaque semper illum in mundo fuisse, et a primo rerum ortu, et generis humani instauratione, se in ecclesiâ, quam in mundo habuit, manifestasse, et ut lucem veram suos illuminasse; etiamsi a maximâ mundi parte, et ab ipsis Judæis Carnalibus *agnitus non sit*: explodens erroneam illorum hypothesein qui Filium Dei ante suam *ἐνανθρώπησιν* se in mundo non manifestasse, neque illi cognitum fuisse, asserabant. Vitringa. Observ. Sacr. Vol. iii. p. 180.

ⁿ Sermons, p. 49. — 52.

^o Secundum autem nullam sententiam hæreticorum, *Verbum Dei caro factum est*. Iren. L. iii. C. 11. p. 189. Conf. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. 2. f. 4. p. 194.

deemed the thing to be incredible^a. The Cerinthians admitted that a celestial Spirit descended occasionally upon Jesus; but they neither allowed that spirit to be personally united with Jesus, nor to be properly divine, as St. John teaches: so that in two respects, those words of the apostle confute their principles^b.

AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, &c. Words diametrically opposite to Cerinthus's hypothesis^c, which made the Logos not the only begotten of the Father, but a remove farther off, viz. the Son of the only begotten, as before observed.

AND OF HIS FULNESS HAVE ALL WE RECEIVED, AND GRACE FOR GRACE. The expression, of his fulness [*ἐκ τῆς πληρώματος αὐτοῦ*] is very observable. The gnostics in general, and the Cerinthians in particular, were wont to talk much of the *πλήρωμα*, or fulness, by which they meant a fictitious plenitude of the Deity, in which the whole race of æons was supposed to subsist,

^a Incredibile præsumpserant Deum carnem. Tertul. contr. Marcion. L. iii. C. 8. p. 401. Conf. Just. Mart. Dial. p. 140, 204. Edit. Jebb.

^b Dum dicit *Verbum caro factum*, et habitavit inter nos; significat ipsum istum λόγον, qui *Filius Dei*, simulque *verus ac secundus Deus* erat, quemque tam multis descripserat verbis, *unum factum*, hoc est, humanam naturam, non ad certum tempus, sed perpetuo, indissolubili, et inseparabili nexu adsumsisse. Budd. Eccl. Apost. p. 440.

^c Indicat eundem istum λόγον, qui caro factus erat, etiam esse *unigenitum Patris*: adeoque discrimen illud quod Cerinthians inter *μονογεῖν* sive unigenitum et λόγον sive Verbum, constituebant, explodit. Buddeus ibid. p. 440.

subsist, and into which spiritual men (such as they esteemed themselves) should hereafter be received. It was the doctrine of the Valentini-
nians, (and probably of the elder Gnostics also) that they were themselves of the spiritual seed, had constant grace, and could not fail of being admitted into the plenitude above^d; while others were in their esteem carnal, had grace but sparingly, or occasionally, and that not to bring them so high as the plenitude, but to an intermediate station only. But St. John here asserts, that^e all Christians equally and indifferently, all believers at large, have received of the plenitude, or fulness of the divine Logos; and that not sparingly, but in the largest measure, grace upon grace, accumulated grace^f: or rather, grace following in constant succession, grace for grace; that is, new succours coming on as quick as the former should wear off or cease, or new supplies for the old ones past and gone^g, without failure, or intermission. Our present rendering, grace
for

^d Iren. L. i. C. 6. p. 31.

^e Docet denique ex hujus unigeniti et primogeniti Dei Filii *πληρώματι* (quâ notione gnostici uti consueverunt) omnes accipere gratiam pro gratiâ, omnes omnis generis et ordinis in Christum credentes, ejusdem in hac vitâ participes esse gratiæ, et ad ejusdem gloriæ spem vocatos esse: neutiquam vero ita se rem habere ut gnostici jactitabant, solos suæ sectæ homines, et suæ imbutos philosophiæ mysteriis, ad summam illam felicitatem primi pleromatis divinitatis adspirare posse, reliquorum credentium animabus inferioris et medii generis beatitudinis statum destinatum esse. Vitringa. Obs. Sacr. L. v. C. 13. p. 155, 156.

^f See Bull. Harmon. Apostol. Dissert. ii. C. 11. p. 481.

^g Vid. Gataker. Adversar. Sacr. C. 27.

Anonymi Fortuita Sacra, p. 80, 81, &c.

Suicer. Thesaur. in *χάρις*, p. 1497.

for grace, is literal, and just; provided only we understand it thus, that whenever one grace ceases or expires, another comes in its place, and is given us for the former, or in lieu of the former.

I have now run through the proeme of St. John's gospel, endeavouring all the way to shew how aptly the expressions suit with the supposition which I here go upon, that it was penned with a particular view to the heresies of Cerinthus and Ebion; to say nothing of Simon Magus, or the Gnostics of those times: for though I have chiefly, or in a manner solely, made Cerinthus's heresy the subject of this article, yet I would be understood to include any other heretics of the same time, or before him, so far as they fell in with the same common errors.

Let us now pass on to St. John's first epistle, in order to consider whether that likewise may not be naturally interpreted the same way; so that one and the same key may serve for both.

Irenæus seems to say, that St. John pointed his epistle^h against the same. Tertullian also intimates, that St. John directed some parts of his epistle against the Ebionitesⁱ. And St. Jerome

^h Igitur et omnes extra dispositionem sunt, qui, sub obtentu agnitionis, alterum quidem Jesum intelligunt, alterum autem Christum, et alterum unigenitum, &c.—Quos Joannes in prædictâ epistolâ fugere eos præcepit, &c. *ibid.* p. 207.

ⁱ At in epistolâ eos maxime antichristos vocat, qui Christum negarent in carne venisse, et qui non putarent Jesum esse Filium Dei. Illud Marcion, hoc Ebion vindicavit. Tertull. *Præscrip.* C. 33. p. 214.

Jerome insinuates, that he pointed his censure both against Cerinthus and Ebion, marking them out as antichrists, in his epistle^k. If we come to examine the epistle itself, we shall easily perceive, that a great part of it was levelled, not so much against Jews or Pagans, as against false christians, against the heretics of that time, Simonians perhaps, or Cerinthians, or Ebionites, or Nicolaitans, or all of them, according as his expressions here, or there, are particularly pointed. The two principal errors which he there censures, were, the denial of Christ's being come in the flesh^l, and the disowning that Jesus was Christ^m. The docetæ, (as they were afterwards called) the followers of Simon Magus, denied Christ's real humanity, making him a mere phantom, shadow, or apparition, a walking ghost, as I observed aboveⁿ. And the Cerinthians making a distinction between Jesus and Christ, did not allow that both were one person. Against those chiefly St. John wrote his epistle. He speaks of antichrists newly risen up^o; which could not be intended of Jews or Pagans, who had opposed the gospel all along: and he speaks of men that had been of the church, but had apostatized from it; *they went out from us, but they were not of us*^p. Let us now proceed to the explication

^k See the whole passage cited above, p. 251.

^l 1 John iv. 3. compare 2 John 7.

^m 1 John ii. 22.

ⁿ See above, p. 12, 150.

^o 1 John ii. 18, 22. iv. 3. 2 John 7.

^p 1 John ii. 19.

explication of those passages in St. John's epistle, which relate to our purpose.

The apostle observes, that **THE WORD OF LIFE** (or the Word in whom was life, John i. 4.) **WAS FROM THE BEGINNING**^a; conformable to what he says in the entrance to his gospel, and in opposition both to Cerinthus and Ebion, who made Jesus a mere man, and who either denied any pre-existing substantial Logos, or, at most, supposed him to stand foremost in the rank of creatures. The apostle further styles the same Logos **ETERNAL LIFE**^r, to intimate his eternal existence, in opposition to the same heretics. He adds, **WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER**, parallel to what he says in his gospel, *was with God*, and which has been explained above^s.

In the second chapter of the same epistle, the apostle describes the antichristian heretics of that time as **DENYING THAT JESUS IS CHRIST**; which amounted to the same with **DENYING THE FATHER AND THE SON**^t; because **WHOSOEVER DENIETH THE SON, THE SAME HATH NOT THE FATHER**^u. Cerinthus denied
that

^a 1 John i. 1.

^r 1 John i. 2. compare 1 John v. 20.

^s See above, p. 254. Conf. Tertull. contr. Prax. C. xv. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. 2. f. 5. p. 295.

^t 1 John ii. 22.

^u 1 John ii. 23. Apostoli verba—commune Cerinthus et Ebionis dogma manifestè perfringunt, nam illi ambo Jesum esse verum Dei Filium ante Mariam, adeoque ante res omnes creatas ex Deo Patre natum omnino negabant, ac proinde, apostolo judice, neque Deum Patrem reverà confessi sunt: siquidem a revelato evangelio, nemo potest Deum Patrem rite colere aut credere, nisi qui Deum Filium simul amplectatur. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. 2. f. 5. p. 296.

that Jesus was Christ, dividing Christ from Jesus, as before explained: and he of consequence denied the Son, because he allowed not that Jesus was personally united with the Word, the eternal Son of God, nor that *that* Logos which he speaks of was the *only begotten* of the Father, being Son only of the only begotten, according to his scheme: so that he totally disowned the divine sonship both of Jesus and Christ, and by such denial denied both the Father and Son^u.

The apostle then goes on to say, WHOSOEVER SHALL CONFESS THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, GOD DWELLETH IN HIM, AND HE IN GOD^w. Where again he manifestly strikes at the Cerinthian and Ebionite principles, which allowed not Jesus to be the Son of God, in any true and proper sense, such as St. John lays down in several places of his writings, but particularly in the entrance to his gospel^x, as explained above. In

^u Dum enim Cerinthiani negabant Jesum esse Christum, per veram scilicet perpetuamque unionem; Christum insuper Filium Dei verum et unigenitum inficiebantur; perinde hoc erat ac si et Patrem et Filium negassent, cum, ut recte Joannes dicit, *qui Filium negat, nec Patrem habeat*.—Eo ipso enim dum negabant Jesum esse Christum, nec ipsum quoque Christum pro Dei Filio agnoscebant, non poterant non multo magis negare, Jesum esse Filium Dei. Buddei Eccles. Apostol. p. 445.

^w 1 John iv. 15. compare iii. 23.

^x Non est dubitandum quin apostolus his verbis confessionem exigat illius Filii Dei quem ipse ex parte supra in hac epistolâ prædicaverat, et plenius in evangelio suo declarat: nempe Filii Dei, qui sit Dei Patris λόγος, qui *in principio* erat, et *apud Deum* erat, et *Deus ipse* erat, per quem *omnia facta sunt*, &c.—Hujusmodi vero Dei Filium Jesum nostrum esse, non confessus est Cerinthus, neque post ipsum Ebion. Bull. Judic. C. 2. s. 9. p. 297.

In the chapter next following, the apostle repeats the same thing as before, or uses words to the same effect: WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, IS BORN OF GOD^a. And soon after adds, WHO IS HE THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD^b? Here lay the main stress, to believe that Jesus, who was truly and really man, was as truly and really the eternal *Son of God*^c. The apostle, in the next verse, seems to point at the docetæ, as he had before done in the same epistle^d, being equally concerned to maintain, that Christ had real flesh, as that he had real divinity; that so the faith of the gospel might stand upon this firm foundation, that the eternal Son of God became Son of man for the salvation of mankind. Hereupon therefore the apostle, in defence of Christ's real humanity, says, THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY WATER AND BLOOD^e. What he elsewhere expresses, by his *coming in the flesh*^f, here he expresses more emphatically, by his *coming in*, or by, *water and blood*; alluding to what Christ shed at his passion, as a proof that he had then a real body, and was really man,

not

^a 1 John v. 1.

^b 1 John v. 5.

^c Quia præ aliis maximè tunc cresceret Cerinthi hæresis, ideo apostolus fidem illam quâ creditur *Jesum esse Dei Filium*, passim in hac epistolâ commendat, urget, inculcat. Bull. ibid. p. 297.

^d 1 John iv. 2, 3. compare 2 John 7. and see Bull. Judic. p. 296. Buddei Eccl. Apostol. p. 550, &c.

^e 1 John v. 6.

^f 1 John i. 1, 2. iv. 2, 3. 2 John 7. compare 1 Tim. iii. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 18. iv. 1.

not a spectre, phantom, or apparition, as some heretics pretended. It is to be noted, that the ancient visionaries, (who were the Simonians, Menandrians, Saturnilians, and Basilidians) being ashamed perhaps to confess Christ crucified^g, contrived any wild supposition imaginable to evade it. Basilides pretended, that Christ himself did not suffer, but that Simon of Cyrene was crucified in his room^h. The elder docetæ had not so happy a talent at inventing, but were content to say, that Christ had no real body, and suffered in appearance only, imposing upon the eyes of the spectators. In opposition probably to that kind of men (of which there might be many in the apostolic age) the apostle here emphatically observes, that Christ came by *water* and *blood*: for his shedding both water and blood out of his side, at his passion, was a demonstration, that there was a real body then hanging upon the cross, not a phantom, or a spiritual substance. Which very argument is well urged by Irenæusⁱ, and Novatian

^g Hence it is that Polycarp joins both together in the same reproof: πᾶς γὰρ, ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι, Ἀντίχριστός ἐστι· καὶ ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς σταυρῆς, καὶ τῆς Διαθέσεως ἐστίν. Polycarp. Epist. C. 7. Conf. Epiphan. xxiv. 4. Philastr. C. 32.

^h Irenæus, Lib. i. C. xxiv. alias xxii. p. 101.

Epiphan. xxiv. 3.

Philastr. C. xxxii. p. 68.

Augustin de Hæres. N. iv.

Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. l. C. 4.

ⁱ Quomodo autem, cum caro non esset, sed pareret (i. e. appareret) quasi homo, crucifixus est, et a latere ejus puncto sanguis exiit et aqua? Iren. Lib. iv. C. 33. (alias 57.) p. 271.

tian^k, in proof of the same thing, against the docetæ. As St. John is the only evangelist who has related that circumstance of the passion^l, so it is observable, how particular a stress he lays upon it; immediately subjoining, in confirmation of it, **AND HE THAT SAW IT** (meaning himself perhaps, or else the soldier that pierced our Lord^m) *bare record*, **AND HIS RECORD IS TRUE**, &c. And he confirms it farther from two prophecies out of the Old Testament. Wherefore it is the more probable that in his epistle before, he alluded to that circumstance, and in proof of Christ's humanity. But St. John strengthens the argument further, by superadding the consideration of the testimony of the spirit. **AND THERE IS THE SPIRIT ALSO BEARING WITNESS, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT IS TRUTH** *"itself*, is essential truth. The Spirit residing in the church, and working in believers by supernatural graces, bears testimony to the doctrine taught by the apostles, and believed by the church; particularly to the doctrine here spoken of, viz. that Christ the *Son of God*, became *Son of man* for the salvation of mankind.

The apostle, having said that the *Spirit is truth*, or essential truth, (which was giving him

^k Sanguis idcirco de manibus ac pedibus, atque ipso latere demanavit, ut nostri consors corporis probaretur, dum occasus nostri legibus moritur. Novat. C. x. p. 31. Edit. Welchm.

^l John xix. 34.

^m See Dodwell, *dissert. in Iren.* 1. p. 39.

ⁿ 1 John v. 6.

him a title, common to God the Father, and to Christ) in order to obviate any misapprehension, or offence, accounts for what he had said, and reconciles it, by declaring presently, that the Father, and the Word, and the Spirit, are all One, are equally truth itself: FOR THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR RECORD IN HEAVEN, THE FATHER, THE WORD, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT; AND THESE THREE ARE ONE^o. Therefore it was as right to say, that the Spirit is truth, as it might be to say it either of Father or Son, since they are all one. That point being cleared, the apostle then returns^p to speak of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, as testifying the same thing to mankind, which is testified above to the angels in heaven. And the Spirit is now particularly mentioned as bearing witness in earth (rather than the Father or the Son) because, since the time of Christ's ascension, the church has been under the special œconomy of the Holy Spirit, who was to *guide* the apostles, and the churches after them, *into all truth*^q.

I know it has been objected, that this way of reckoning the Spirit twice, is reducing the six witnesses to five. Now, indeed, if the text had called them six witnesses, there would have been some force in the objection: but as it is mere fancy and presumption, to make them six, we may take the liberty to think, that the fifth twice told will fully answer all that the text mentions.

The

^o 1 John v. 7.

^p 1 John v. 8.

^q John xvi. 13.

* The apostle having said thus much of the testimony of the Spirit, who is one with the Father, comes next to make the proper application of it, inforcing it still farther, by directly calling it the testimony of God: IF WE RECEIVE THE WITNESS OF MEN, THE WITNESS OF GOD IS GREATER; FOR THIS IS THE WITNESS OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH TESTIFIED OF HIS SON^r.—THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON^s. This is the burden of the whole epistle, the sum and substance of what the apostle aims at quite through^t, that God had been pleased to reconcile the world unto himself by the mediation of his own divine Son made man. This was what the water and the blood testified in part, and what the Spirit of God, one with God, more abundantly testifies in the whole^u.

I was willing thus occasionally to explain that celebrated passage, concerning the three witnesses, which has been the subject of long and warm debates, both as to the genuineness of

^r 1 John v. 9.

^s 1 John v. 11.

^t Hæc est summa: omnem doctorem, qui confessus fuerit unum Jesum Christum, verum Dei Filium, propter hominum salutem verè hominem factum, ex Deo esse; (nimirum eâ parte, quâ id confitetur et docet, ut recte Estius) contra pro pseudo prophetâ atque antichristo habendum esse, quisquis hoc confessus non fuerit. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. 2. s. 9. p. 297.

^u Immo quæ deinceps, ver. 6, 7, 8. de tribus testibus, in cælo pariter ac in terrâ, docet, huc præcipue comparata esse videntur, ut ostendat Jesum esse Filium Dei, quod Cerinthiani, ut diximus negabant. Hinc concludit: *si hominum testimonium admittimus, Dei testimonium majus est.* Quodnam est hoc Dei testimonium? respondet: *atque hoc est, quod Deus de Filio suo testimonium dixit.* Buddeus. Eccl. Apostol. p. 446.

of the text, and the connexion of it with the rest, upon which hangs the true interpretation. The exposition which I have given, appears to me just and natural, supposing the text to be genuine: and I conceive, that the genuineness thereof has been sufficiently maintained by a great many able hands^w; and particularly by a late learned accurate writer^x, to whose useful labours I refer the reader for satisfaction, and now I return.

The apostle, in the close, remarkably sums up all, in these strong and chosen words: **WE KNOW THAT THE SON OF GOD IS COME, AND HATH GIVEN US AN UNDERSTANDING, THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM THAT IS TRUE: AND WE ARE IN HIM THAT IS TRUE, EVEN IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE^y:** I need not here stand to prove, that the title of *true God*, in this text, is to be understood of Christ, because I have done it elsewhere^z: but I would observe farther, how aptly every word is chosen to obviate the erroneous tenets of Cerinthus, and of other the like false teachers of those times. *The Son of God*: not the son of Joseph and Mary, nor the son of the only begotten, but the

^w See most of them numbered up in Taylor's true scripture doctrine of the Trinity, p. 32.

^x Mr. Twell's critical examination of the new Text and Version of the New Testament, part ii. p. 123.—154.

^y 1 John v. 20.

^z Sermons, p. 206—214.

Compare Taylor's true Scripture Doctrine, p. 282, &c.
Dr. Bishop's eight Sermons, p. 56, &c.

the immediate Son of God; related to God as a son to a father, not as a creature to his Lord and Maker. He *is come*, come in the flesh, and not merely to reside for a time, or occasionally, and to fly off again but to abide and dwell with man, cloathed with humanity. We are *in him that is true*, in the true Father, by *his Son Jesus Christ*: who is the *true God*; not an inferior power or angel, (such as Cerinthus supposed the demiurgus to be) not a created æon, the offspring of the monogenes, or of silence, as Cerinthus fondly imagined the Logos to be; but *true God*, one with the Father: *and eternal life*, the same that had been with the Father from the beginning, before any thing was created, consequently from all eternity.

I have now gone through both the epistle and gospel of St. John, pointing out the most observable passages in both, which concerned the present question. The sum of what I have advanced under this article, is, that St. John most apparently levelled a great part of his first epistle against the Cerinthian doctrines; and that it may be strongly argued, from evidences external and internal, that he wrote the proeme to his gospel with the same, or the like views. It appears further, that in his epistle particularly, he has asserted the necessity of believing our Lord's divine sonship, his proper divinity, under pain of being excluded heaven and happiness: *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. Whosoever denies Christ to be Son of God* (in St. John's

John's sense of Son, a son that was always with God, and is God) is a *liar* and *antichrist*, denying both *the Father and the Son*^a. The conclusion therefore from all is, that the denying our blessed Lord's real divinity, is heresy and antichristianism, much to be abhorred by every disciple of Christ, according to the infallible decision of an inspired apostle^b. Many were the evasions and subterfuges of self opinionated men, who thought it a thing incredible that the divine word should put on flesh, or God become man, and who chose rather to pass censure upon the wisdom of heaven, than suspect their own: but sober and modest men resigned up their faith to divine revelation, as was their bounden duty to do; and among the foremost of those was our blessed apostle. So now, besides the reason of things, taking in what the scriptures have declared of the truth of our doctrine, and besides the true and natural import of the form of baptism (urged above) we have moreover the determination of St. John himself, for the importance

^a 1 John ii. 22, 23. Conf. John iii. 16, 17, 18.

^b Hæc autem ideò fusiùs prosecutus sum, quod hinc non modo ex antiquissimorum Patrum monumentis, sed etiam ex scriptis apostolicis, omnibus liqueat, fuisse in ipso apostolorum ævo, qui Christi Domini nostri divinitatem negarunt, quique eo nomine pro hæreticis, adeoque pro antichristis (tantum aberat ut fratres et vera ecclesiæ membra censerentur) ab apostolis habiti fuerint. Præterea, hinc quoque clarè elucet, doctrinam de Filii Dei ἐσταλώς, sive de Christo Θεανθρώπω, vero Deo et vero homine, ut a nascente evangelio variè a variis hæreticis impugnata fuit, ita ab ecclesiæ veris pastoribus, modis omnibus omnique studio, tanquam Fidei Christianæ caput et fundamentum ipsum, religiosissime semper conservatam et custoditam fuisse. Bull. Judic. Eccl. p. 298.

ance of the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, and of consequence, for the doctrine of a coequal and coeternal Trinity.

But supposing it might be reasonably doubted (though I see not how it can) whether we have rightly interpreted St. John as to the main thing, or whether Cerinthus and others of like principles, were directly struck at by him; yet still we may be able to maintain our point another way, by showing at least that the ancient churches, next succeeding the apostles, and the churches after, did condemn Cerinthus and Ebion, and all others who denied our Lord's real and proper divinity. And I may here observe, before I go farther, that if what I have offered about St. John's condemning the doctrine of Cerinthus, be just, it may be considered as looking forwards, and condemning the principles of the Ebionites also, whom I am next to mention: and so on the other hand, what I shall have to say of the Ebionites, and their being condemned by the church, may be understood to look backwards, equally affecting the Cerinthians so far as they agreed in the same common sentiments. Indeed, Bishop Bull had considered both together, and in a scriptural view, as I have hitherto considered Cerinthus singly. But I apprehend that if one were taken in a scriptural, and the other in an ecclesiastical view, the two parts would reflect light and strength one upon another, and the whole would be both more distinct, and more complete.

pleat. I proceed then to consider the Ebionites, as censured by the church, in the second and third centuries, for denying our Lord's divinity, though, if what I have advanced be true, they were fully condemned before for the same, even within the apostolic age, as well as the Cerinthians.

A. D. 72. *Ebion.*

From Cerinthus the master, I pass on to Ebion, his disciple and successor^a; so called, I suppose, because of his being Cerinthus's admirer and follower, in some things. They seem to have been contemporaries, both of the apostolic age, though Ebion, perhaps, the younger or later of the two. I follow Epiphanius chiefly, in placing Ebion as I do^b, a little after the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. But if he flourished ten, or twenty years later, or began to spread his heresy but a little before St. John wrote his gospel, (that is, before A. D. 97.) as Jerome seems to have thought, that will make no difference with respect to the main thing which I am upon.

Neither is it very material, whether there ever was such a person as Ebion, founder of the sect,
or

^a Hujus successor Hebion fuit, Cerintho non in omni parte consentiens. Pseudo Tertullian Præscript. C. 48. p. 221.

Hebion discipulus Cerinthi, in multis ei similiter errans, &c. Philastr. Hæres. xxxvii. p. 81.

Cerinthum, et hujus successorem Ebionem. Hieronym. Dial. contr. Lucifer. p. 304.

^b Epiphan. Hær. xxx. 2.

or whether the Ebionites took their name from their mean condition, or from their poor and abject notions, rather than from any leader called Ebion. But as the ancients in general do assert there was such a man^c, though some few of them may seem to contradict it, I cannot but esteem their testimonies as much more weighty than the conjectures of some learned moderns^d, though specious, to the contrary. Besides that other as learned and judicious moderns^e have well defended the ancient persuasion, and have sufficiently replied to the common exceptions made to it. Wherefore, there remains very little room for doubt or scruple, as to the truth of the fact, that there was formerly such a person as Ebion, founder of the sect of the Ebionites.

The

^c Tertullian Præscript. C. x, xxxiii. de carn. Christi, C. xiv, xviii. Virg. Veland. C. vi.

Victorinus Petavion. in Apocalypf.

Alexand. Alexandr. Epist. Synod. apud Theodorit. E. H. L. i. C. iv. p. 15.

Hilarius, p. 779, 789, 799, 916, 919. Edit. Bened.

Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 27.

Theodorit. Hæret. Fabul. p. 188, 218.

Epiphan. Hæref. xxx. 2. et passim.

Philastr. Hær. xxxvii. p. 81.

Hieron. contr. Lucifer. p. 304, et in Isai. i. 3. p. 10. adv. Helvid. p. 141. et alibi.

Augustin. Epist. ad Hieronym. lxxii. p. 195. Ed. Bened.

^d See the most of them numbered up in Ittigius de Hæref. primi secul. p. 303. Buddeus Eccles. Apostol. p. 492.

^e Bull. Judic. Eccles. C. ii. f. 17. p. 303.

Fabricius in not. ad Philastr. p. 81, &c.

Mosheim. Observ. Sacr. L. i. C. 5. Et in Vindic. cont.

Toland. C. vii.

Buddeus Eccles. Apostol. p. 491, &c.

Berriman, Serm. p. 48.

The Ebionites, as all allow, denied any proper divinity of Christ. Some of them indeed admitted that he was born of a virgin^f; but most of them, the elder Ebionites especially, denied even that^g, and none of them confessed his true godhead. I shall not here stand to enumerate or clear their sentiments, because they are well known; besides that they will appear distinctly in the sequel, as I run through the antenicene writers in order, who have condemned the Ebionites by name, or at the least have condemned their principles, as amounting to heresy.

A. D. 107, I shall begin with Ignatius, an eminent personage, a disciple of St. John, and by him ordained bishop of Antioch, and who afterwards died a martyr, either in 116, or 107. Accounts differ as to the time: I chuse, with the learned Mosheim^h, to take the earlier date, according to the acts of his martyrdom, being as probable as the other, Ignatius does not mention the Ebionites by name; but he plainly enough condemns their principles, in more places than one.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, he commends their unity of faith and doctrine, inasmuch

^f Vid. Origen. contr. Cels. L. v. p. 272.

Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 1. p. 219.

^g Vid. Irenæus, L. iii. C. 21. p. 215. L. v. C. 1. p. 292.

Tertullian de carn. Christi, C. xiv. p. 319.

Eusebius Eccl. H. L. iii. C. 27.

Epiphani. Hæret. xxx. p. 125.

Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 1. p. 218.

Philastr. Hæres. xxxvii. p. 82.

^h Mosheim, Vindiciæ antiquæ contr. Toland. C. viii. p. 230.

asmuch as they walked according to truth, and no heresy dwelt with themⁱ. Then he proceeds to speak of heretics, as follows: "Some are
 " wont to bear about them the name [of Christ]
 " in wicked craftiness, while they commit things
 " unworthy of God; whom it behoves you to
 " avoid as you would wild beasts. For they
 " are a kind of fell dogs that will bite you
 " unawares: you should be upon your guard
 " against them, as they are next to incurable.
 " There is one physician fleshly and spiritual,
 " made and not made, God incarnate, in mor-
 " tality true life, both of Mary and of God,
 " first passible and then impassible, [Jesus Christ
 " our Lord] let no one therefore deceive you;
 " as hitherto you are not deceived, but are wholly
 " of God^k."

These words of Ignatius, in their general view, strike at all the heresies of that time, which any way tended to undermine the doctrine of God incarnate, whether by impugning Christ's humanity, or divinity: and as the Ebionites and Cerinthians were among those that impugned our Lord's divinity, the censure here given, must
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ⁱ Ignat. Epist. ad Ephes. C. vi.

^k Εἰώθασι γὰρ τινες δόλῳ πονηρῶ τὸ ὄνομα περιφέρειν, ἀλλὰ τινα πρᾶσσοντες ἀνάξια θεῷ ἔς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ὡς θηρία ἐκκλίνειν· εἰσὶν γὰρ κίνες λυσσῶντες, λαθροθήκται· ἐς δεῖ ὑμᾶς φυλάσσεσθαι ὄντας δυσθεραπεύτους· εἷς ἰατρός ἐστιν, σαρκικός τε καὶ πνευματικός, γενητὸς καὶ ἀγενητὸς, ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος θεός, ἐν θανάτῳ ζωὴ ἀληθινή, καὶ ἐκ Μαρίας καὶ ἐκ θεῷ, πρῶτον παθητὸς καὶ τότε ἀπαθής· μὴ ἔν τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατάτω, ὥσπερ ἡδὲ ἐξαπατᾷσθε, ὅλοι ὄντες θεῷ.
 Ignat. ad Ephes. vii, viii.

of course affect them. Some of the expressions seem to be particularly pointed at them. *Made and not made*: the words *not made*, directly confront both those heresies¹. So also, the words *God incarnate*, *God coming in the flesh*. Then again, *of Mary and of God*: those heretics would have said, of Mary and of Joseph; none of them would then have said, *of God*. Let the reader observe, that Ignatius here plainly excludes all such heretics from salvation, since they had rejected the only physician that could heal them, *Christ godman*, by denying the union of God and man in him^m. The principles which this truly primitive apostolical writer goes upon, are,

1. That the salutary doctrine of redemption is, that the reconciliation of God and man is wrought by a mediator who is both God and man.
2. That denying and opposing that doctrine, is in effect, renouncing all claim to the benefit of it, since it is reasonable to think, that when God reveals his good and gracious designs towards mankind, they who will not give credit to them, shall have

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¹ See my second Defence, 254, alias 259.

Bull, Def. F. N. sect. iii. C. 2. p. 39. Judic. Eccl. C. i. N. 1. p. 286.

^m Nulla est hominibus salus, nisi per unicum animarum medicum, Christum Deum et hominem, Deum inter hominesque mediatorem. At isti hujusmodi medicum et mediatorem nullum agnoscunt, nullum volunt. Itaque plane deplorata est ipsorum salus, nisi scilicet ab hæresi suâ tandem serio resipiscant, ac Deum Filium pro suâ salute incarnatum atque hominem factum amplectantur, atque omni obsequio venerentur. Bull. Judic. Ecclesi. p. 286.

no part in them. St. John himself seems to go upon the same general principle, where he says, *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father*^a. He that throws up the belief of the privileges granted, does interpretatively throw up the privileges themselves. This is a maxim which appears to run through the writings of all the fathers, where they are treating of heresies; and we shall find more of it as we pass along.

In the same epistle, the same heavenly man, after expressing his detestation of heresies in very strong words, which I have quoted above^b, proceeds to set down the faith of the church, with respect to the incarnation of the Son of God, in these remarkable lines: "For, Jesus Christ, *our God*, was conceived of Mary, according to the divine dispensation, being of the seed of David, and of the Holy Spirit^c." Against the impugnors of this doctrine, the good man, in the same place, threatens hell and damnation^d: so little was he acquainted with that neutrality and indifference which has since too much prevailed. Yet he was a person of admirable lenity in his temper, and of a most exalted charity; which he proved by that very instance, since nothing could have extorted those expressions

^a 1 John ii. 23.

^b See above, p. 278.

^c Ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς, ἐκυφορέθη ὑπὸ Μαρίας, κατ' οἰκονομίαν θεῶ, ἐκ σπέρματος μὲν Δαβὶδ, πνεύματος δὲ ἁγίου. Ignat. ad Ephes. C, xviii.

^d Ὁ τοιοῦτος ὑπαρὸς γενόμενος, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον χωρήσει, ὁμοίως καὶ ἀπέναν αὐτοῦ. C. xvi.

expressions from him, but a most ardent zeal for the salvation of souls^e.

A. D. 155. Justin the philosopher, afterwards martyr, is our next considerable writer. His real and great concern for the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, appears all the way through his famous dialogue with Trypho the Jew; being the relation of a conference he had held at Ephesus with that most celebrated rabbi^f. He makes no express mention of the Ebionites, and so does not condemn them by name; but he does it more than once, by necessary inference and implication. I forbear to cite places, chusing rather, for brevity sake, to refer the reader to Bishop Bull, who has produced them at length, and descanted properly upon them^g.

But there is one passage in Justin, which requires a more particular consideration, because the Socinians and remonstrants have frequently

^e In seductores, et seductos istos intonat, et ignem ipsis inextinguibilem minatur vir alioqui mitissimus, quod primam religionis Christianæ veritatem, cujus præcipue *κύλος καὶ ἰδραῖωμα* esse debet, monente apostolo, omnis vera Christi Ecclesia—nempe *magnum illud pietatis mysterium, Deum in carne manifestatum* fuisse convellere niterentur. Qui istam impietatem moliti sunt, duo fuere, Ignatii ætate, hæreticorum genera, sibi invicem non minus quam veritati repugnantium. Alii divinam quandam servatori nostro naturam attribuentes, humanam prorsus ipsi detraxerunt—quâ in hæresi fuere Simoniani, Menandriani, Saturniniani, alique, quos propterea omnes *δοκῆτὰς* et *φαντασιαστὰς* posterior ætas appellavit. Alii contra, humanam tantum in Domino Jesu naturam agnoscebant, ut Cerinthiani, et Ebionæi. Utra hæresis perniciosior fuerit, haud facile dictu. Bull. Judic. C. i. p. 287.

^f Euseb. E. H. L. iv. C. 18.

^g Bull. Judic. Eccles. C. vii. s. xi, xii. p. 349, &c.

quently boasted of it, and do so to this day, as proving, in their opinion, that those who disowned Christ's proper divinity, or even pre-existence, were tolerated in the primitive church, were received as brethren and fellow christians. This pretence has been largely and solidly confuted by Bishop Bull; and as there is scarce room for adding any thing (the question being in a manner exhausted) so neither is there much need of any reinforcement. But it may be of some use to recapitulate what that learned prelate has said, as also to take some brief notice of what the adversaries have since attempted, in order to depreciate and disparage it, instead of making any just reply to it. I shall first cite the whole passage of Justin, and then give a summary account of Bishop Bull's reasonings upon it, that so the reader may judge for himself, as to the force of them. Trypho, the Jew, in the dialogue, having a little before told Justin, that his doctrine concerning Christ (that he was God before the world, and afterwards became man, and of a virgin) appeared to him a very great paradox, and contrary to common sense, Justin replies as follows^h: “ I
“ am

^h Οἶδ' ὅτι παράδοξος ὁ λόγος δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆ γένεος ὑμῶν, οἵτινες τὰ τῷ Θεῷ ἔτε νοῆσαι, ἔτε ποιῆσαι ποτε βεβήλησθε, ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν διδασκάλων ὑμῶν, ὡς αὐτὸς ὁ Θεὸς βοᾷ· ἤδη μέντοι, ὦ Τρίφων, εἶπον, ἐκ ἀπόλλυται τὸ τοιοῦτον [τῆτον] εἶναι Χριστὸν τῷ Θεῷ, ἐὰν ἀποδείξαι μὴ δύναμαι ὅτι καὶ προῤῥήρχεν υἱὸς τῷ ποιητῷ τῶν ὅλων, Θεὸς ὢν, καὶ γεγενῆσθαι ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς παρθένου, ἀλλὰ ἐκ παντὸς ἀποδεικνυμένῃ ὅτι ἔτος ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ τῷ Θεῷ, ὅστις ἔτος ἐσθαι, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀποδεικνύω ὅτι προῤῥήρχε, καὶ γεννηθῆναι ἄνθρωπος

“ am very sensible that this account will look
 “ like a paradox, and more especially to those
 “ of your nation, who are in no disposition
 “ either to apprehend or follow the things of
 “ God, but the dictates only of your own rab-
 “ bins, as God himself proclaims¹. Neverthe-
 “ less (said I to Trypho) my argument does not
 “ fall, as to his being the Messiah of God,
 “ though I should not be able to prove that the
 “ Son of the Maker of the universe preexisted,
 “ being God, and was born a man of the
 “ virgin: but after it has been once fully proved
 “ that he is the Messiah of God (whatever else
 “ he be) though I should not farther demon-
 “ strate his preexistence, and his condescending
 “ to become man of like passions with us, taking
 “ flesh upon him according to the Father’s
 “ good pleasure, all that you can justly say
 “ is, that I am so far in an error, but you
 “ should not hereupon deny that he is the
 “ Christ, appearing as a man born of human
 “ parents, and approving himself as the chosen
 “ Messiah.

ἄνθρωπος ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν, σάρκα ἔχων, κατὰ τὴν τῷ πατρὶ ἐβλήν
 ὑπέμεινεν, ἐν τούτῳ πεπλανῆσθαι με μόνον λέγειν δίκαιον, ἀλλὰ μὴ
 ἀρεῖσθαι ὅτι ἔτι ἐστὶν ὁ χριστός, εἰὰν φαίνεται ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώ-
 πων γεννηθεὶς, καὶ ἐκλογὴ γινόμενος εἰς τὸν χριστὸν εἶναι ἀποδεικνύεται·
 καὶ γὰρ εἰσὶ τινες, ὧ φίλοι, ἔλεγον ἀπὸ τῶ ἡμετέρῃ [ὑμετέρῃ] γένε-
 ὁμολογούντες αὐτὸν χριστὸν εἶναι, ἄνθρωπον δὲ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γινόμενον
 ἀποφαινόμενοι· οἷς ἐ συντίθεμαι ἕδ’ ἂν πλεῖστοι ταῦτα μοι δοξάσαντες
 εἴποιεν, ἐπειδὴ ἐκ ἀνθρωπείοις διδάγμασι κεκλιευσμεθα ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τῷ
 χριστῷ πείθεσθαι, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῶν μακαρίων προφητῶν κηρυχθεῖσι
 καὶ δι’ αὐτῶ διδαχθεῖσι. Just. Dial. p. 140. Jebb. 235. Thirlby.

¹ Isaiah xxix. 13.

“Messiah. For, said I, my good friends, some
 “there are of our profession (of your nation^k)
 “who acknowledging him to be the Messiah, yet
 “conceive of him as of a man born of human
 “parents: whom however I assent not to, no
 “not though there were ever so many concur-
 “ring to tell me so^l; since we are commanded by
 “Christ himself, not to submit to the doctrines
 “of men, but to what the holy prophets have
 “delivered, and himself hath taught us.”

This is the famous passage, from whence
 (as I have said) the socinians and remonstrants
 have endeavoured to draw an argument for
 neutrality or indifference concerning the ar-
 ticle of Christ’s divinity; imagining that the
 impugnors of that doctrine were received by
 Justin and the church in his time, as brethren
 and fellow christians. But there is nothing in
 this

^k *Ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑμετέρου γένους*, is undoubtedly the true reading; warranted by the propriety of the expression, and Justin’s usual phraseology; and the whole turn and texture of the sentence. See Bull. *Judic. Eccl. C. vii. f. 6. p. 346.* Thirlby, in locum.

Nevertheless, one might perhaps, in prudence, wave this just criticism, since nothing depends upon it, as to the main cause (except it be, to make Justin write sense so far) but the insisting upon it, gives the adversaries a handle for dropping the material things, and making some shew of an opposition upon this bypoint, as if all depended upon it.

^l I prefer the rendering here given before the common one, taking the hint from the ingenious Mr. Thirlby in his notes upon the passage. The common rendering is; “neither would it be admitted by the generality [of Christians] who are in my sentiments.” The sense is flat.

this paragraph of Justin to support such fancies. Let it be observed in the first place, that the persons whom Justin here speaks of, as believing in Jesus as the Messiah, but denying his birth of a virgin, and his preexistence, were most certainly the Ebionites of his time. Their hypothesis, and theirs only, exactly answers the description here given; as Bishop Bull has demonstrated at large^m. This premised, we may now proceed to lay down the arguments urged by Bishop Bull, against the construction offered by the remonstrants, and next subjoin a summary of the solutions he has given in answer to their objections.

1. As the passage itself in Justin, is very far from declaring in express terms, or by any certain consequence, what some collect from it, so it is very unlikely, that Justin should be singular in his sentiments on that head, directly thwarting the sentiments of Ignatius before him, of Irenæus and Tertullian of the same century with him, and, in short, of all the ancients besides him, who have constantly condemned those Ebionite principles, as pernicious and hereticalⁿ.

2. The argument drawn from this passage, by our adversaries, if it proves any thing at all, proves too much; which is a certain sign that it is faulty. For it proves that even those who denied our Lord's birth of a virgin (a truth attested to by the prophets and evangelists,

^m Bull. Judic. Eccles. C. vii. f. 8. p. 347.

ⁿ See Bull. Judic. C. vii. f. 5. p. 345.

gelists, and most religiously held by the ancient church) were received as fellow christians; which is highly absurdⁿ.

3. It is very observable, that the Ebionites rejected three of the gospels, receiving only St. Matthew's (or what they called so) and that curtailed. They rejected likewise all St. Paul's writings, reproaching him as an apostate^o. How unlikely is it, that Justin should own such reprobates as those were, for fellow christians! Episcopus was himself sensible of this difficulty, and could not but acknowledge it plainly absurd, that Justin, and the church of his time, should hold any communion with such an ungodly race of men as the Ebionites were^p. What salvo therefore had he for it? None but the denying that Justin was there speaking of the Ebionites; though it is a plain case, that he was. Therefore Episcopus was here caught in his
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ⁿ Qui enim hic a Justino notantur dogmatistæ, servatorem nostrum, non modo hominem tantum, sed hominem ex hominibus genitum, hoc est, ex viri et fœminæ concubitu, communi hominum more, natum esse affirmarunt. Hinc igitur, si recte ex hoc loco remonstrantes argumentantur, sequetur, Justinum ecclesiamque Justini tempore, cum iis qui susque deque habitâ sacrorum evangelistarum autoritate, spretâque apostolicæ et catholicæ ecclesiæ constanti concordique traditione Christum hominem ex Mariâ Virgine natum esse negare ausi sunt, communionem coluisse: quod quisquis serio sibi persuaserit, ad anticyras plane relegandus est. Bull. *ibid.* f. 3. p. 343.

^o Ebionæi—solo eo quod est secundum Mattheum evangelio utuntur, et apostolum Paulum recusant, apostatam eum legis dicentes. *Iren. L. i. C. 26. Conf. Epiphani. Hær. xxx. 13. Euseb. E. H. L. iii. C. 27. Origen. contra Cels. L. v. p. 274. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 1.*

^p Vid. *Respons. ad specim. Calumn.* p. 296.

own snare, as Bishop Bull justly observes, retorting his own concessions upon him, with irresistible force¹.

4. Add to this, that the liturgies then used in the church, were so full and express for the divinity of Christ, that there is no likelihood that the Ebionites should join in them; neither could they do it without solemn mockery. See this argument drawn out at large, in Bishop Bull².

5. If the church would have communicated with the Ebionites, the Ebionites would not with them: and therefore Justin could never have intended to call them brethren. See this also explained at large in Bishop Bull³. These are the reasons which that incomparable prelate has urged against the socinian, or episcopian construction of the passage in Justin. But as it is not always sufficient to demonstrate a truth, and leave it to shift for itself, without reconciling it, and clearing it from objections; we may next go on to specify the solutions given to the difficulties pleaded on the other side.

1. It is pleaded, that according to Justin, a person might reasonably be supposed the Messiah, though no more than a man. But to this it is answered, that Justin no where asserts that such a thing could be supposed consistently with scripture, or good sense. No;
his

¹ Vid. Bull. Append. ad C. vii. sect. 9. 357.

² Bull. *ibid.* p. 353.

³ Bull. *ibid.* p. 349. Conf. p. 346.

his constant doctrine is, and which he every where labours and contends for, that the Messiah is, and must be God^t. But since the Jews, with whom he was disputing, had taken up low notions of their expected Messiah, Justin urged it against Trypho, as an argument to him, and such as upon his principles he could not gainsay, that he might receive Jesus (as his Ebionite countrymen had done) for the Messiah, though he disowned his godhead. So there was no necessity for his continuing in Judaism, though he would not admit the divinity of Jesus.

2. It is pleaded, that those impugnors of Christ's divinity, are styled men of our profession, that is, christians; and therefore he admitted them as fellow christians. To say nothing here of the truer reading (*men of your nation*) there is no consequence in the argument. The Ebionites were christians in a large sense, men of christian profession, nominal christians; as Justin allowed the worst of heretics to be^u: and this is all he could mean by allowing the Ebionites to be christians^w.

3. It is pleaded, that Justin signified his dissent from them very faintly, and coldly (*whom I assent not to*) expressing no detestation or abhorrence of the men, or of their prin-

^t See this explained at large in Bull. C. vii. p. 344, 345.

^u Vid. Dialog. p. 100, 244, 245. Jebb. alias, 208, 311, 312. Apolog. i. p. 43. Edit. Thirlby.

^w Vid. Bull. Judic. C. vii. f. 6. p. 346. Zornii Opusc. Sacr. Vol. 1. p. 77.

principles. To which it may be answered^w 1. That he expresses himself as strongly here, as he does in another cause of great moment, against those who denied that the world was created^w. 2. As Justin here expressed no abhorrence, so neither did he express any approbation of them; as his way was when he dissented from^x persons of the church, with whom he held communion. So we may fairly set one negative argument against another. 3. There might be special reasons, why, in that particular case, he did not launch out into satire and invective against the ebionites. He was endeavouring to persuade Trypho, to come so far at least as the ebionites had done, rather than continue an hardened and desperate Jew. It would have been highly improper, in the conducting an argument of that kind^y, to have fallen severely from the ebionites, whose tenets he was making so good use of^z. 4. Yet even in that very passage, he gave oblique intimations of his heartily disapproving the ebionite principles. He rebukes Trypho and his associates with some tartness, as shutting their eyes against the truth, and being slow to perceive the things of God, for their not admitting

^w Ἡ καὶ τὸν κόσμον οὐ ἀγένητον λέγεις; εἰσὶν οἱ λέγοντες, ὃ μέντοι γε αὐτοῖς συγκατατίθεμα, ἐγώ. Just. Dial. p. 20. alias 148.

^x Vid. Justin. Dial. p. 243. alias 311.

^y See Thirlby, upon the passage, p. 243.

^z See a like argument urged by Novatian from the doctrine of the docetæ; which he heartily detested, but yet contented himself, in that instance, while making use of it, with saying, *Quod tamen nos non probamus*, (C. 23.) which was sufficient. More would have been there and then improper.

admitting the divinity of Jesus Christ, so fully proved from the Old Testament. What then could he think of the ebionites, who had both Old Testament and New before them, and yet rejected their Lord's divinity^a? Then again, in the close of the same passage, Justin plainly enough intimates, that those who denied Christ's divinity, or birth of a virgin, rejected the doctrine of the church, and of the prophets, and of Christ himself, to follow human inventions, or doctrines of men^b. So if Justin did not condemn the ebionites with hard words, he did it with hard arguments, which were altogether as forcible, and served his purpose better. Upon the whole therefore, nothing can be inferred, from this passage of Justin, to countenance the receiving of the ebionites, or their successors, to christian communion. The contrary is evident as the light. And, indeed it would be hard to say for what purpose Justin wrote that very dialogue (the main substance whereof is taken up in proving the divinity of Christ) if after all he thought it an article of slight moment, and such as was not of weight sufficient to be made a term of christian communion. But enough of this.

Bishop Bull's answer to Episcopius has met with the esteem of the learned world^c, and nothing like a just reply has been attempted since.

^a Compare Bull, C. vii. f. 4. p. 344.

^b Compare Bull, *ibid.* p. 347.

^c See Nelson's Life of Bull, p. 383, &c.

since. Only Le Clerc, about twenty years after, writing an ecclesiastical history^d, was pleased in passing to make some brief strictures upon it, and to bring up again some of the former pretences, which had long been exploded. He deals more in hints, and insinuations, than in arguments, or direct assertions, like one who had an inclination to put some fallacy upon his readers, but at the same time to provide for a retreat. He hints, ^ethat the persons whom Justin there speaks of, might be nazaræans. He was very sensible where the difficulty pressed, if they were supposed to be ebionites; as Bishop Bull had fully proved them to have been. But whether they are to be called ebionites, or nazaræans, they were undoubtedly men that denied Christ's divinity, and his birth of a virgin, (as before shewn) and were therefore heretics in ecclesiastical account. As to nazaræans, about whom so much has been boasted of late^f, it will be soon enough to consider how far Justin had a view to them, when it can be proved, that their principles, with respect to Christ, were the same with those which Justin there condemns. A hard thing to make out^g.

Le

^d Published A. D. 1716.

^e Non constare an ii, seu Nazaræi, seu quicunque alii fuerint, negarent, præter hominem ex hominibus natum, quidquam in Jesu fuisse; hoc est, divinam ejus naturam rejicerent, neque enim perspicue hic loquitur Justinus. Cleric. Eccl. Hist. p. 635.

^f By Zuicker, Sandius, Toland, Artemonius, and others.

^g Vid. Mosheim Vindic. antiq. Disc. advers. Toland. C. 5, 6. Buddeus Eccl. Apostol. p. 345—550.

Mosheim Hist. Eccl. Sæc. 1. par. 2. s. i. C. 4. p. 99.

Conf.

Le Clerc would appear to doubt, whether the persons pointed to in Justin, really denied Christ's divine nature or no. It is as plain as possible, that they did. But however if they did not, then there is an end of all the remonstrant pretences at once: and there is not so much as colour left for saying, that Justin held communion with the impugnors of Christ's divinity.

He goes on to observe how mildly and softly Justin treated them^h, above common heretics, whom he allowed not to be christians. This is the old episcopian pleaⁱ, which had been abundantly answered by Bishop Bull, as Le Clerc well knew; though he took no notice. Neither does it appear that Justin believed the ebionites (of whom he speaks) to have been Christians in any other sense than as other heretics were, that is, nominal christians, as I have observed above.

He proceeds to say, that it cannot be determined, for want of ancient evidences, how far those nazaræans (for so he chuses to call them) were tolerated^k. Directly false, or sophistical.

Conf. Buddeus *Ecclef. Apostol.* p. 547.

Bull. *Judic. Eccl. C. ii. f. 13, 14, 15, 16. Primit. Trad. C. i. f. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.*

Huetius in not. ad Origen. comment. p. 74.

Lequien. *dissert. Damascen. vii. p. 94, &c.*

^h Eum minime in eos investum, ut in Basilidianos, Saturnilianos, Valentinianos, et Marcionitas, quos Christianos fuisse negat. *ibid.* p. 635.

ⁱ Respons. ad Specim. Calumn. p. 296.

^k Sed quatenus eos ferrent alii Christiani, aut quâ ipsi se erga alios gererent, ob veterum monumentorum penuriam, nobis non constat. p. 636.

phistical. Indeed, as to nazaræans, since it is disputable who, or what they were, or how far orthodox¹, (accounts being different, and sometimes repugnant) it may be disputable how they were received by other christians. But as to such persons as Justin speaks of, (whatever name we assign them) men that denied Christ's divinity, and miraculous conception, it is a very clear case and fully attested by many and undoubted evidences, that they never were received by the church of Christ, but constantly rejected as antichrists, and heretics. And this is all that we need contend for. The rest is only playing with words and names, and is mere amusement, wide of the point in hand.

He goes on to infer, that since Justin was so moderate in that case, there is no reason now for condemning the socinians or others that impugn Christ's divinity. That is plainly his drift and meaning, only a little covertly expressed^m. So, though he had neither answered, nor

ⁱ Though I say disputable, because very learned men have been much divided about the nazaræans, yet I make no question myself, but the nazaræans were the remains of the first christians of Jerusalem, were intirely orthodox in the article of Christ's divinity, and directly opposite to the ebionites. So far, at least, Bishop Bull and Lequien have, in my judgment, clearly and satisfactorily proved. So that to obtrude the nazaræans upon us here, instead of ebionites, is only raising a mist, to confound weak readers.

^m Interim cum Justinus de ejusmodi hominibus, non exiguo errore laborantibus, tantâ verborum moderatione loquatur, invidia non est iis facienda, qui Jesum non tantum Messiam, sed etiam a spiritu sancto, præter naturæ ordinem, conceptum credentes,

nor considered the reasons offered by Bishop Bull against any such inference from Justin's words, nor the solutions given to the objections before made, nor indeed had advanced any thing beyond mere surmises and shuffles; yet he draws the same conclusion, which the remonstrants had before done, as if he had proved his point to satisfaction.

But lest he should seem intirely to have passed over Bishop Bull's performance, he singles out a bypointⁿ, (not material in respect of the main thing) to contest with him. It is the emendation of a word, which Bishop Bull had offered, and justified, like a judicious writer and a true critic, to make his author speak sense, rather than to support the main cause, which did not need it: I say, Le Clerc singles out that, to dispute upon, and that is all. And even there he is entirely wrong, as has been abundantly shewn by a learned hand^o, for which reason I shall say no more of it. But allowing those gentlemen their absurd reading, the cause stands just where it did; and they are as far off as ever, from being able to prove from that passage in Justin martyr, that the socinians should be received as fellow christians.

I had

dentem, totumque novum testamentum admittentes, et ad ejus normam mores componentes, æternis suppliciis addicere non audent; eo tantum quod in arduo capite, de divinâ Christi naturâ, a ceteris dissentiant, quia eam in novi testamenti libris doceri non putant. Clerici Eccles. Hist. p. 636.

ⁿ Clerici Eccles. Histor. p. 636.

^o Thirlby, in notis ad Just. Mart. . 234.

I had almost forgot to take notice of two insinuations dropped by Le Clerc in their favour, viz. That they receive the whole canon (which the ebionites did not) and they lead good moral lives. As to the first, it is only maintaining their heresy with great art, and more exquisite subtlety, and in a way which may do the more mischief, because the poison is concealed. The ancient heretics were plainer men. Besides, any one who has seen the five letters of inspiration, and knows also what freedom that author has taken with the sacred writers, in his comments, and elsewhere, will conceive no high opinion of his veneration for the scriptures. It is keeping them indeed, for the saving of appearances, but in order to expose them the more insidiously.

As to a good moral life, that is, a partial obedience, it avails nothing, while maintaining of heresies is itself immoral practice, both against God and man. Besides that the natural consequence of focinianism is deism; which leads to all immorality. And this distant, and almost insensible way of introducing immorality is the most dangerous of any. For, thousands perhaps may be thus led by slow and almost imperceptible degrees into it, who could not have been brought to it by the shorter, coarser methods. But I pass on.

There is another gentleman, who after Le Clerc, has appeared on the same side. He calls himself Artemonius in his last piece^p, as in
another,

^p Initium evangelii S. Joannis restitutum per L. M. Artemonium, A. D. 1726.

another, long before, Lucas Mellierus, and is known to be Samuel Crellius, descended from the famous John Crellius. He hath here acted a more ungenerous part than Le Clerc himself had done. He pretends, first, that Le Clerc, (who had scarce touched the main things, as I have shewn) had confuted Bishop Bull; and next insinuates, that the bishop had laid violent hands upon the text of Justin, only to serve his hypothesis: which is untrue in both its parts. For, the bishop's correction is undoubtedly right: or if it were not, yet nothing depends upon it, the main cause being perfectly secure without it. In the last place, he takes notice of Mr. Thirlby's reply to Le Clerc, and contents himself with a kind of faint promise to make some rejoinder^a. I shall only remark, that when a person so well prepared for any impracticable undertaking (as appears by his strange attempt^r upon John i. 1) declines

^a Post apostolorum tempora, pro christianis in ecclesiâ tolerantis [Ebionæi] habebantur; ut ex illo celebri apud Justinum martyrem, in Dial. cum Tryphone, loco p. 267. est manifestum. Quem Georg. Bullus magno conatu frustra convellere nititur, et violentam ei infert manum, vocem ἡμετέρας, quia suæ hypothesis est contraria, in ὑμετέρας mutans, confutatus etiam a celeberr. Clerico Hist. Eccl. ad ann. cxi. Cui quidem vir clariss. Styanus Thirlby pro Bullio respondit. Verum sint quæ Thirlbyo reponi, et præterea plura in hanc rem afferri possent: quod fortasse aliquando fiet, &c. Artemonius, p. 516.

^r It is an attempt to make an emendation (Θεῶν ἢ ὁ λόγος, instead of Θεὸς ἢ ὁ λόγος) against all the manuscripts of the New Testament, against all the versions, against all the quotations from antiquity, in a very critical passage, (where, if any where, some remains of such a reading would have been preserved among ebionites, samosatenians, arians, or others, had it ever been known) by mere dint of wit, and force of fancy, without any foundation of reason, or authority.

clines venturing, and promises only, and that faintly too, where he has a strong inclination, it is a certain sign, that he apprehends more difficulty than ordinary; and that while he verbally triumphed over Bishop Bull, he was wiser than to engage in close dispute.

The reader, I hope, will pardon me for dwelling so long upon this passage in Justin. I thought it worth the considering with some care: and I have endeavoured to be as short as the nature of the question would permit me to be. I am sensible after all, that I have not taken compass enough to do full justice to it; and therefore I intreat the reader, who would have intire satisfaction about it, to consult Bishop Bull himself, in whom he will find it.

A. D. 176. About this time*, very probably, the famous Irenæus wrote his treatise against heresies: and he is the first that condemns the ebionites by name; and that not merely for being immoral men, nor merely for rejecting a great part of the sacred canon, neither yet for denying Christ's birth of a virgin, but for impugning Christ's divinity. He excludes them from church communion, and from a state of grace and salvation, chiefly, or solely, upon that score. He writes thus: "The spiritual man will pass judgment also upon the ebionites. How can they
" be

* Vid. Oudin. de Scriptor. Eccles. Vol. i. p. 207. Dodwell. Dissert. iv. 360. Fabric. Bibl. Gr. L. v. C. i. p. 66.

“ be saved, unless it was God (ὁ Θεός) that
 “ wrought their salvation on earth? or how shall
 “ man come to God, if God had not come to
 “ man?” Irenæus here lays the charge upon
 the fundamental error of the Ebionites, their re-
 jecting Christ’s divinity; an error which they
 had imbibed from their countrymen the Jews,
 and brought with them into christianity. And
 this was the principal ground and reason of
 their rejecting some of the gospels, particularly
 St. John’s. For they had not yet learned the
 art of reconciling the doctrine of the New Testa-
 ment with their principles. Irenæus excludes
 the men from salvation for their disbelief, ab-
 stracting from the consideration of invincible
 ignorance, or sincerity; which would be imper-
 tinently brought in with respect to this or that
 particular case, since it is common to all, and
 makes no difference as to the abstract nature
 of things, or our judgment thereupon. For
 we are to judge by what we know, leaving
 things secret to God. The ebionites are here
 censured as rejecting salvation, because they re-
 jected the belief of the divine methods appointed
 for it; agreeable to a maxim before laid down
 by Ignatius, and before him by St. John, as I have
 observed above^u.

Before

^u Ἀναρριβεῖ δὲ καὶ τὲς Ἠβιῶνες· πῶς δύνανται σωθῆναι, εἰ μὴ ὁ
 Θεὸς ᾧ ὁ τὴν σωτηρίαν αὐτῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἐργασάμενος; ἢ πῶς ἄνθρωπος
 χωρήσει εἰς Θεόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἔχωρήθῃ εἰς ἄνθρωπον; Iren. L. iv.
 C. 33. alias 53.

^u See above, p. 279, 280.

Before I proceed further with Irenæus, I would here take notice by the way, how considerable a person he was. He is said to have been near the apostles times^u; for indeed he was born in, or near that age^w, and was advanced in^x years when he wrote his book against heresies. The charismata, the miraculous gifts were common in his days, and he himself a witness of them in many instances. The gifts of healing (as restoring sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and limbs to the cripple, yea and life to the dead) continued in the church to his time; besides the gift of tongues, and of prophecy, and of casting out devils, and the like^y. He speaks twice of raising the dead, and in one place very emphatically thus: “And now, as “ I before said, the dead have risen, and have “ continued with us many years^z :” those very gifts are what Irenæus more than once appeals to, as proofs of the true faith resting in the church, in opposition to heretics who had not the extraordinary graces, but were detected in their imposture, whenever they pretended

^u Ὁ ἐγγὺς τῶν Ἀποστόλων γεγόμενος. Basil. de Sp. S. C. 29. Ὁ τῶν Ἀποστόλων διάδοχος. Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 2. Epiphani. Hær. H. xxiv. 8. Vir Apostolicorum Temporum. Hieron. Epist. liii. ad Theodorum. p. 581.

^w See Dodwell Dissert. in Iren. Diss. iii. p. 229. Addenda, p. 500.

^x Dodwell Dissert. iv. p. 291. Oudin. Vol. 1. p. 207.

^y Vid. Iren. L. 2. C. 31. p. 164. alias C. 56. p. 188. L. ii. C. 32. alias 57. L. v. C. 6.

^z Ἦδη δὲ, καθὼς ἔφαμεν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἠγέρθησαν, καὶ παρέμειναν σὺν ἡμῖν ἱκανοῖς ἔτεσι. L. ii. C. 32. p. 166.

Conf. Dodwell Dissert. ii. p. 165, &c.

tended to them^z. He lays it down as a rule, and a maxim, that truth then went along with the church, because the spirit of truth rested upon it^a; which is the argument St. Paul himself uses to the like purpose^b: and it was a very good one at that time, and as circumstances then stood^c. But I return.

Irenæus, in another place, smartly reproves the ebionites for denying Christ's divinity, and his birth of a virgin^d. "God therefore became
" man, and the Lord himself saved us, giving
" the sign of the virgin: and not as some
" now say, who presume to interpret the scrip-
" ture, *Behold a young woman shall be with*
" *child, and shall bear a son*; as Theodotion the
" Ephesian, and Aquila of Pontus, both of
" them

^z Iren. L. ii. C. 31, 32.

^a Ubi enim ecclesia, ibi et Spiritus Dei, et ubi Spiritus Dei illic ecclesia, et omnis gratia: Spiritus autem veritas. Iren. L. iii. C. 24. alias 40.

^b Gal. iii. 2.

^c Nihil ergo prorsus video quod in hoc Irenæi nostri testimonio desiderare possint adversarii. Ut enim ecclesiis omnibus sic solis datas fuisse gratias testatur Irenæus, nullis nimirum hæreticorum aliorumve quorumcunque infidelium conventiculis. Inde sequitur, ut falsam fuisse hæreticorum fidem, sic contra ecclesiæ orthodoxam, divino constituisse testimonio. Quæ utinam cogitent sociniani, alique hodierni omnes a primavorum Christiānorum doctrinā in fide novatores. Dodwell Diss. ii. p. 168.

^d 'Ο Θεός ἔν ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο· καὶ αὐτὸς κύριος ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς, δὲς τὸ τῆς παρθένου σημεῖον· ἀλλ' ἔχ' ὡς ἔνιοι φασὶ τῶν νῦν μεθερμηνεύειν τολμῶντων τὴν γραφὴν· ἰδὲ ἡ νεάνις ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τίξεται υἱόν, ὡς Θεοδοτίων ἡρμηνεύσεν ὁ Εφῆσιος, καὶ Ἀκύλας ὁ Πεντιλὸς· ἀμφότεροι Ἰουδαῖοι προσήλυτοι· οἷς κατακολυθησαντες οἱ Εβραῖοι, ἐκ τῆ Ἰωσήφ αὐτὸν γεγενῆσθαι· φάσκουσι, tantam dispositionem Dei dissolventes, quantum ad ipsos est, frustrantes prophetarum testimonium quod operatus est Deus. L. iii. C. 21. alias 24.

“ them Jewish profelytes, interpret. Whom the
 “ ebionites following, pretend he was begotten
 “ of Joseph, thereby dissolving, so far as in
 “ them lies, that so important dispensation of
 “ God, and frustrating the prediction of the
 “ prophets which God has brought about.”
 Here it is observable how strong the expression
 is, God (ὁ Θεός) became man, and the Lord
 himself saved us. So far in opposition to the
 ebionites, with respect to their denial of Christ’s
 divinity. The rest relates to their denial of his
 miraculous conception. Could any one judge
 from his smart reproof of them in the close, that
 those men were received as christian brethren in
 that age? Absurd and incredible.

I would only take notice further, that some
 over censorious critics have suspected that Ire-
 næus was here out in his chronology, and incon-
 sistent with himself, in making the ebionites to
 be followers of Aquila and Theodotion. But
 Irenæus is to be understood of the ebionites of his
 own time only^d. The sect had subsisted long be-
 fore, but now received fresh countenance and
 encouragement from the versions of Aquila and
 Theodotion, which they greedily closed in with,
 as favouring their heresy.

There is a third passage in Irenæus, where
 he again falls upon the Ebionites, for their op-
 posing Christ’s divinity, and birth of a virgin^e.

“ Vain

^d Vid. Mosheim Vindic. Antiq. C. vii. p. 179, 180.

^e Vani autem et ebionæi, unionem Dei et hominis per
 fidem non recipientes in suam animam, sed in veteri genera-
 tionis

“ Vain also are the ebionites, in not receiving the
 “ union of God and man, by faith, into their
 “ souls, but persisting still in the old leaven of
 “ [common] generation: for they will not un-
 “ derstand, that the holy spirit came upon
 “ Mary, and the *power of the Highest overshad-*
 “ *owed her*, and therefore that which was born
 “ of her is *holy*, and is the Son of the Highest,
 “ of God the Father of all, who wrought his
 “ incarnation, and manifested a new genera-
 “ tion; that as by the first generation we had
 “ inherited death, so by this other generation
 “ we might inherit life. They then reject the
 “ mixture of heavenly wine, content to be no
 “ more than earthly water, not taking God
 “ into their mixture, but abiding only in Adam
 “ who was vanquished and expelled paradise.
 “ They consider not, that as at the beginning
 “ of

tionis perseverantes fermento; neque intelligere volentes, quoniam spiritus sanctus advenit in Mariam, et virtus altissimi obumbravit eam: quapropter et quod generatum est, Sanctum est, et Filius altissimi, Dei Patris omnium, qui operatus est incarnationem ejus, et novam ostendit generationem; uti quemadmodum per priorem generationem mortem hæreditavimus, sic per generationem hanc hæreditaremus vitam. Reprobant itaque hi commixtionem vini cælestis, et solam aquam secularem volunt esse, non recipientes Deum ad commixtionem suam; perseverantes autem in eo qui victus est, Adam, et projectus est de paradiso: non contemplantes, quoniam quemadmodum ab initio plasmationis nostræ in Adam, ea quæ fuit a Deo adspiratio vitæ, unita plasmati, animavit hominem, et animal rationale ostendit; sic in fine Verbum Patris et Spiritus Dei adunitus antiquæ substantiæ plasmationis adæ, viventem et perfectum effecit hominem, capientem perfectum Patrem: ut quemadmodum in animali omnes mortui sumus, sic in spirituali omnes vivificemur. Iren. L. v. C. 1. p. 293. alias p. 394.

“ of our formation in Adam, the breath of life
 “ from God, united with the frame, inlivened
 “ the man, and rendered him a rational crea-
 “ ture; so at the end, the word of the Father
 “ and Spirit of God, united with the old sub-
 “ stance of Adam’s formation, has made a
 “ living and perfect man comprehending the
 “ perfect Father; that as in the natural man
 “ we are all dead, so in the spiritual man, we
 “ may all be made alive.”

Here we are to observe, that Irenæus judged the ebionites to be in a dangerous or desperate state, on the account of their not admitting the union of God and man in the person of Christ, on account of their not taking the divine nature in, to supply the imperfections of the human, the Word of the Father, the Spirit of God to enliven and exalt the human nature, the old Adam. I may remark by the way, that Irenæus here seems to understand Spirit of God, and Holy Spirit before, of the second person, of the Logos himself coming down upon the virgin. So the earliest fathers commonly do^f, interpreting Luke i. 35. to that sense:

^f Hoc ergo Corpus, in quod inductus est Spiritus Sanctus, &c. Herm. L. iii. Simul. 5. C. 6.

Ὡν μὲν τὸ πρῶτον πνεῦμα, ἐγένετο σὰρξ. Clem. Ep. 2^{da}. C. 9.

Τὸ πνεῦμα ἓν, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, ἡδὲν ἁλλοιοῦσαι
 δέμεις, ἢ τὸν λόγον. Justin. Mart. Apol. i. p. 54. alias 75.

Προελθὼν δὲ ὁ λόγος, δημιουργίας αἰτίας, ἔπειτα καὶ ἑαυτὸν γινῶ,
 ὅταν ὁ λόγον σὰρξ γένηται. Clem. Alex. Strom. L. v. p. 654.

Qua autem Spiritus Dei et Virtus Altissimi, non potest infra angelos haberi. Tertul. de Carn. Christi. C. xiv.

Ecce,

sense: which I the rather note, because so their asserting Christ's birth of a virgin, and his pre-existing as Spirit of God, and God, amounted to the same thing. For the reason given by St. Luke, (or rather by the angel in St. Luke) why Mary should conceive, though she knew not a man, is, that the *Holy Spirit should come upon her*, that the *Power of the Highest* (δυναμις ὑψίστη) should *overshadow* her. So that, after this, to deny the birth of a virgin, amounted, in construction, to the same with denying any such coming of an Holy Spirit upon Mary, any divine preexistence of Christ. And hence, I conceive, it is that we so often find, in the ancient fathers, those two doctrines so linked together, or so intermingled with each other, that they appear, in a manner, but as the same thing twice told, or the same doctrine diversely expressed. The
ebionites

Ecce, inquit, ab angelo prædicatum est, *propterea quod nascetur Sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei*: caro itaque nata est, caro utique erit Filius Dei. Immo, de Spiritu Dei dictum est. Certè enim de Spiritu Sancto Virgo concepit; et quod concepit, id peperit: id ergo nasci habebat quod erat conceptum et pariendum; id est Spiritus, cujus et vocabitur nomen Emmanuel, quod est interpretatum *nobiscum Deus*. Caro autem Deus non est, ut de illâ dictum sit *quod nascetur Sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei*, sed ille qui in eâ natus est, Deus.—Quis Deus in eo natus? Sermo et Spiritus. Tertul. contr. Prax. C. 27.

Verbum Dei incarnatum per Spiritum illum de quo angelus refert, Spiritus veniet in te, &c.—Ut principalitas nominis istius, Filius Dei, in Spiritu sit Domini qui descendit et venit. Novat. C. xx.

Hic in Virgine labitur, carne Spiritus Sanctus induitur. Cyprian. de Idolol. vanit. sic. Cod. German. et 4. MSS. Pamel.

Dëscendens itaque de cœlo Sanctus ille Spiritus, sanctum Virginem, cujus utero se insinuaret, elegit. Lactant. L. iv. C. 12.

ebionites denied the descent of the Logos upon Mary: they rejected the divine part in Christ, admitting only the human. This is what Irenæus calls rejecting the heavenly wine (alluding to their celebrating the eucharist in water only, without wine^a) not receiving God into their mixture, but contenting themselves with the earthly Adam, who was cast out of paradise; intimating that the ebionites should as certainly be excluded heaven. The thought which Irenæus goes upon, may be illustrated from a passage in Hippolytus, which, speaking of Christ, runs thus: "As it was prophesied beforehand, " so he manifested himself of the Virgin and Holy " Spirit; made a new man (a second Adam) having an heavenly nature of the Father, as he is " the Logos, and having an earthly one, as of " the old Adam, incarnate of a virgin. He came " into the world, and manifested himself as " God^b." But to return to Irenæus, it is very plain, that he looked upon the reconciliation of God and man, as depending intirely upon the Mediator's being both in one^c. And in how strict a sense he understood Christ to be God, is well known to as many as know any thing of

^a Epiphan. Hær. xxx. 16. Conf. Philastr. 77. p. 146.

^b Καθ' ὃν ἔν τρόπον ἐκηρύχθη, κατὰ τῆτον καὶ παρὼν ἰφανέωσει
 αὐτὸν ἐκ παρθένου καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος, καινὸς ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος·
 τὸ μὲν ἐράνιον ἔχων τὸ πατρῶον ὡς λόγος, τὸ δὲ ἐπίγειον, ὡς ἐκ
 παλαιῆς Ἀδὰμ διὰ παρθένου σαρκούμενος, ἔτος προελθὼν εἰς κόσμον
 θεὸς ἰφανερῶθη. κ. τ. λ. Hippolyt. contr. Noet. C. 17. p. 18, 19.
 Conf. Tertullian. de Carn. Christi. C. 17.

^c Vid. Iren. L. iii. C. 18. alias 20.

of Irenæus. But if the English reader desires farther satisfaction on that head, he may have it abundantly from Mr. Alexander's essay on Irenæus^a, a very judicious and faithful performance, a finished piece in its kind. I heartily wish that that learned gentleman had leisure, as he has abilities, to draw out more of the fathers in the same way.

A. D. 206. Tertullian reckons the ebionites among the antichrists, for denying Jesus to be Son of God^b, that is, for impugning the divinity of Christ. For that Tertullian understood the phrase of *Son of God* as applied to Christ, to mean the same as *God of God*^c, is plain from all his writings. And what he must think of the dangerous state the ebionites were in, by their heresy in that article, may appear sufficiently from a maxim he lays down, that none have life who believe not in the Son, and none believe in the Son, who admit not that he is a Son^d in such a sense as he had mentioned.

He

^a Printed for John Clarke and Richard Hett, A. D. 1727.

^b At in epistolâ eos maxime antichristos vocat qui Christum negarent in carne venisse, et qui non putarent Jesum esse Filium Dei: illud Marcion, hoc Hebion vindicavit. Tertul. Præscript. C. 33.

^c Hunc ex Deo prolatum dicimus, et prolatione generatum, et idcirco *Filium Dei* et *Deum* dictum, ex unitate substantiæ.—Ita de Spiritu Spiritus, et de Deo Deus, ut lumen de lumine accensum.—Quod de Deo profectum est, Deus est, et Dei Filius, et unus ambo. Ita de Spiritu Spiritus, et de Deo Deus, &c. Tertul. Apol. C. 21.

^d Qui Filium non habet, nec vitam habet; non habet autem Filium, qui eum alium quam Filium credit. Contr. Prax. C. 30.

He again censures the ebionites, as making Christ a mere man, and denying that he is the Son of God*. Where it is observable he passes over in silence their denying his birth of a virgin, or condemns both their positions in one, as resolving into the same error. However, the stress of his censure lies upon their impugning Christ's divine sonship, that is, his real and proper divinity: for such was Tertullian's sense of Son of God, as I before intimated.

In another place, he speaks of the ebionites as denying Christ's birth of a virgin, but makes that amount to denying his being Son of God^f, in his high sense of that phrase. And the reason why the denial of the one implied the denial of the other, (in his way of arguing, common to other fathers) seems to have been this; that it would have been utterly unworthy ^g of the Son of God to have taken man upon him, except

* Quâ autem Spiritus Dei, et virtus altissimi, non potest infra angelos haberi, Deus scilicet et Dei Filius. Quanto ergo dum hominem gestat minor angelis factus est, tanto non dum angelum gestat. Poterit hæc opinio Hebioni convenire, qui nudum hominem et tantum ex semine David, id est non et Dei Filium constituit Jesum. Tertullian. de Carn. Christi, C. 14.

^f Non competebat ex semine humano Dei Filium nasci, ne si totus esset Filius hominis, non esset et Dei Filius, nihilque haberet amplius Solomone, et amplius Jona, et de Hebionis opinione credendus erat. Ergo jam Dei Filius ex Patris Dei semine, id est Spiritu; vacabat enim viri semen apud habentem Dei semen. Tertullian. de Carn. Christi. C. 18.

^g Ante omnia autem commendanda erit ratio quæ præfuit, ut Dei Filius de virgine nasceretur. Nove nasci debebat novæ nativitatis dedicator. — Conceptit igitur virgo et peperit Emanuel, nobiscum Deum. Hæc est nativitas nova dum homo

except it were by a virgin : therefore the denial of the mother's virginity amounted to a denial of God's being born of her ; it was making it absurd. From whence we see a further reason of what I before hinted, that the two false positions of the ebionites were considered as near allied, and were condemned in one, as hanging both together, and perhaps one invented for the sake of the other^h. The denying the miraculous conception was, by inference and implication, denying Christ's divinity, as the affirming of the one was conceived to amount to affirming the other. But the later ebionites (as we shall see) having a mind to reform their scheme, contrived at length to admit the miraculous conception, and still rejected our Lord's divinity : which was retaining the main substance of their heresy, but under a better appearance than before. We shall observe presently what the church of Christ thought of them after that new reform.

A. D. 249. Origen is the first that takes notice of the ebionites as divided into two fortsⁱ, one denying, as before, Christ's birth of a virgin,

nascitur in Deo, in quo homine Deus natus est; carne antiqui feminis susceptâ sine femine antiquo, ut illam novo femine, id est spiritualiter [fort. spiritali] reformaret, exclusis antiquitatis sordibus, expiatam. Tertul. de Carn. Christi. C. 17.

^h See what the learned Vitranga says of Cerinthus's denying the miraculous conception, *Observ. Sacr. L. v. C. 12. f. 6. p. 145, 146. Edit. ult.*

ⁱ Οὗτοι δὲ εἰσὶν οἱ διττοὶ Εβιοναῖοι, ἥτοι ἐκ παρθένου ὁμολογῶντες ὁμοίως ἡμῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν, ἢ ἔχ' ἔτω γεγενῆσθαι, ἀλλ' ὡς τὴν λοιπὴν ἀνθρώπου. *Orig. contr. Cels. p. 272. Conf. comment. in Matth. p. 427.*

a virgin, the other admitting it. But still he reckons both among the pretended christians*, and introduces them among other heretics¹. But whether or no he charged them with heresy on account of their denying our Lord's divinity, would not certainly appear, if he had not expressed himself more fully in some other of his writings. In his comment upon St. Matthew, he takes the like notice of the two sorts of ebionites, charging both as rejecting Christ's divinity^m, and as poor in faithⁿ towards Christ Jesus; alluding to their name, which signifies the same as poor. But Pamphilus, in his apology for Origen, produces some passages of his, out of his comments on the epistle to Titus, where he condemns the ebionites more expressly, as heretics, for their denying Christ's divinity^o. As to any doubt which may be made about Pamphilus's apology, (appearing only in Rufinus's version) and the

* Orig. *ibid.* p. 272.

¹ P. 271, 272, 274.

^m Οὐ μὴν καὶ μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτῶν διολογίας, *Comm. in Matt.*

p. 427.

ⁿ Τῶ Εβιοναίῳ πτωχέοντι περὶ τὴν εἰς Ἰησοῦν πίστιν. *ibid.* p. 428.

^o Quid vero sit hæreticus homo, pro viribus nostris, secundum quod sentire possumus, describamus. Omnis qui se Christo credere profitetur et tamen alium Deum legis et prophetarum, alium evangeliorum Deum dicit, &c.—hujusmodi homines hæreticos designamus—unum idemque credendum est de eo qui de Domino nostro Jesu Christo falsi aliquid senserit: sive secundum eos qui dicunt eum ex Joseph et Mariâ natum, sicut sunt Hebionitæ et Valentiniani; sive secundum eos qui primogenitum eum negant et totius creaturæ Deum, et Verbum, et sapiëntiam quæ est initium viarum Dei, antequam aliquid fieret ante sæcula fundatam, atque ante omnes colles generatam, sed hominem solum eum credentes. Pamphil. *Apolog.* p. 226. Ed. Bened. Conf. *Comment. in Joann.* p. 397.

the credit due to it, I refer the reader to Bishop Bull, who has largely discussed that question, and has sufficiently maintained the authority of that version^p. As to Origen's own orthodoxy in the article of Christ's divinity, it has been abundantly vindicated, and cleared from all reasonable exception^q.

A. D. 290. I shall add but one writer more, Victorinus Petavionensis, before referred to as saying, that St. John wrote his gospel against Ebion, among others who were of the school of Satan^r. It is very plain, by his manner of expression, that he looked upon Ebion as a very ill man and an heretic, being of Satan's school, and condemned by the apostle himself. And considering how particular St. John is, in setting forth the divinity of Christ, we cannot doubt but Victorinus's censure of Ebion respects that article.

I might add many testimonies of postnicene fathers, to confirm what I have been proving, namely, that the ebionites were constantly looked upon as heretics for denying our Lord's divinity. But I chuse to go no lower than the antenicene writers, because they are sufficient, and they are the less to be excepted to; and I am willing also to consult the ease of my readers, as well as to spare myself needless trouble.

^p Bull, Def. F. N. sect. ii. C. 9. p. 114, &c.

^q Bishop Bull, sect. ii. C. 9.

Compare my second Defence, Q. xii. p. 347, &c. alias p. 352, &c.

^r See above, p. 276.

trouble. I am aware of a passage in St. Jerome, which seems to say, that the ebionites and Cerinthians were condemned as heretics upon another account, not relating to our Lord's divinity^s: and I observe, that the learned Le Clerc has endeavoured to make use of it^t for the supporting a favourite hypothesis, which he appears too fond of. But it is very certain, that Jerome's words in that place, if interpreted with utmost rigour, are a perfect contradiction to all antiquity, and to what himself has asserted in other places of his works^u. Some therefore have greatly blamed S. Jerome^x for prevaricating in the contradictory account he here gives; while others, more kindly, and I think more justly, have endeavoured to bring him off by a candid construction^y. Whichever way we take, there is nothing concerned in it, except it be

^s Si hoc verum est, in Cerinthi et Ebionis hæresim delabimur, qui credentes in Christo propter hoc solum a patribus anathematizati sunt, quod legis ceremonias Christi evangelio miscuerunt, et sic nova confessi sunt, ut vetera non amitterent. Quid dicam de Ebionitis qui Christianos esse se simulant? Usque hodie per totas orientis synagogas inter Judæos hæresis est quæ dicitur Minæorum, et a pharisæis nunc usque damnatur; quos vulgo Nazaræos nuncupant, qui credunt in Christum Filium Dei, natum de Virgine Mariâ, et eum dicunt esse qui sub Pontio Pilato passus est et resurrexit, in quem et nos credimus. Sed dum volunt et Judæi esse et Christiani, nec Judæi sunt nec Christiani. Hieron. ad August. Ep. lxxiv. Opp. Tom. iv. 623. Bened.

^t Clerici Eccles. Histor. p. 477.

^u See two passages quoted above, p. 251, 252. And compare Hieronym. contr. Helvid. Tom. iv. 140.

^x Mosheim. Vindic. Antiq. contr. Toland. p. 164.

^y Bull Judic. Eccles. C. 2. s. 13. p. 300.

Remarks on "Christianity as old, &c" with respect to ecclesiastical antiquity: first part continued, p. 78, 79.

be St. Jerome's character. For as to the cause we are upon, it is too firmly established by the ecclesiastical writers in general, and even Jerome in particular (as I before hinted) to be at all weakened by this single passage to the contrary, if it were contrary.

Having shewn above, as I humbly conceive, that the cerinthians (with whom I would be understood to include the ebionites) were condemned by St. John himself, for impugning our Lord's divinity, and having proved further, that the ebionites (with whom I would be understood to include the cerinthians) were condemned all along in the church for the first three centuries; the conclusion I now draw is, that both cerinthians and ebionites stand condemned from the days of the apostles, and downwards, for the opposition they made to that important doctrine. After this, it will be let's needful to prove that others also were condemned in like manner for the like opposition to the same doctrine. But since the doing it may tend in some measure to confirm what has been said, I shall go on to mention other impugnors of our Lord's divinity within the three first centuries, and a little farther: only, I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible in the account, not to weary the reader.

A. D. 195. *Theodotus.*

Theodotus a citizen of Byzantium, by trade a currier, but a man of parts, and competently

tently furnished with secular learning, having denied his Saviour in time of persecution, and being afterwards upbraided for it, as one that had denied his God; to extenuate the offence, he pretended that he had not denied God, but man^a, for that Christ was no more. A miserable salvo for a guilty practice; which instead of lessening his crime, enhanced it yet more, and was so far from removing the just obloquy he before lay under, that it served only to edge and enforce it. However, he hereupon became the reviver of an old heresy, or the ringleader of a new one (new in dress and circumstances) and soon after called by the new name of the “God denying apostasy^b.” The first account we have of this matter is from a nameless author in Eusebius, reasonably supposed, upon comparing other testimonies^c, to have been Caius, the Roman presbyter, who flourished about A. D. 214. Learned men have inquired how Caius could say, that Theodotus was founder of the heresy^d, and the first that made Christ a mere man, when it is certain and

^a Epiphani. Hær. Liv. i. Augustin. Hær. 33.

Philastr. Hæref. C. 50.

Damascen. Hær. 54.

Synodic. Pappi. C. 3.

Pseudo Tertullian. Præscript. C. 53.

Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 5.

^b Ἀρρησιθῆος ἀποστασία, Euseb. H. E. L. v. C. 28.

^c Vid. Pearson, vindic. Ignat. par. 2. p. 23. Opp. Posth. p. 147, &c. Cave Histor. Literar. Vol. i. p. 65.

^d Τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ πατέρα ταύτης τῆς Ἀρρησιθῆος ἀποστασίας — πρῶτον εἰπόντα ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν χριστόν. — τὸν τῆς αἰρέσεως ταύτης ἐυρίτην. Euseb. *ibid*.

and manifest, that both cerinthians and ebionites had done it before him. Some say plainly, that Caius was guilty of a blunder^c: which indeed is cutting the dispute short, and may be a good way, if there be not a better. Others say, that Theodotus was really the first that made Jesus a mere man, for that the cerinthians and ebionites, before, admitted of a superior nature, a Spirit assistant from above, residing at times in Jesus, which made him more than a common man^f. But it will be difficult to prove, either that Ebion was in the same scheme with Cerinthus, as to the doctrine of æons, and as to the dividing of Jesus from Christ, or that he was not exactly in the same principles which Theodotus espoused, as to making Christ a mere man. Eusebius's account of the ebionites, and their tenets^g, seems to represent their scheme as being exactly the same in that respect; and Theodorit is very express for its being so^h, only Theodotus's was a little more refined than that of the ancients ebionites, because he allowed the miraculous conception, or birth of a virgin, which they denied. However, both they and he supposed Christ a mere man: and therefore he was not the

^c Ittigius de Hæresiarcho, sect. ii. C. 15. p. 261.

^f Vitring observat. Sacr. L. v. C. 10. p. 128. Edit. ult.

^g Euseb. E. H. L. iii. C. 27.

^h Ὁ δὲ Κλήριθος τὸν μὲν Ἰησοῦν ἐξ Ἰωσήφ καὶ Μαρίας ἔφησε γεννηθῆναι κατὰ κοινὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων νόμον, ἀνῆλθεν δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν κατεβὰς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν. Εὐριπιδῆς δὲ καὶ Θεοδοττιανοί, καὶ Ἀρτιμονιανοί, καὶ Φωτιανοί ψιλὸν ἀνθρώπινον εἰσέλασιν ἐκ τῆς παρθένου τὸν Χριστὸν γεννηθῆναι. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. v. C. 11. p. 278.

the first that taught it. Some therefore think that Theodotus is said to be first, because he was the first among the gentile christiansⁱ; for Cerinthus and Ebion were of Jewish extract: which account appears fair and plausible. But I conceive, after all, that Caius was not considering in that place, who in the church had first taught that Christ was a mere man, but who had been the founder of such a particular sect, called Theodotians, or Artemonians, and who had first taught them to deny Christ, under the pretence of his being a mere man. Theodotus, plainly, was their founder and leader: he was at the head of that revolt, the first man that undertook to conduct it, and to support it upon that principle. The other accounts of Theodotus lead to this sense, and in the main, say the same thing that Caius does. Epiphanius takes notice, that all the other christians who were apprehended and brought to the question along with Theodotus, honestly confessed Christ, and suffered^k: he was the only man of the company, that presumed to deny him, afterwards inventing an odd salvo for it, being more of an artist in his way^l, than others were. No one else, at that time, and upon that occasion, durst venture to deny his God: he was the first that

ⁱ Bull. Judic. C. 3. f. 1. p. 304.

^k Epiphan. Hær. 54. 1.

^l Οὗτος ἐν παιδείᾳ Ἑλληνικῇ ἄκρος γενόμενος, ἅμα δὲ ἄλλοις τῶν ἐν ἡμέραις τῇ τότε διωγμῷ μόνος ἐκπεσὼν, μαρτυρησάντων ἐκείνων διὰ θείον. Damschen. Hær. 54.

that then broke the ice, and led the way^m, instructing others to say after him, that it was not denying God, but man. I know not whether in one particular, he may not be thought to have exceeded the irreverence and impiety of Ebion, namely, in his calling Christ a mere man, considered even in his state of exaltation, when he abjured him. Ebion would have called him God, so considered, as having been then deified, according to his way of thinkingⁿ. But Caius probably had no view to any such nicety of distinction, but intended only to say, that Theodotus was the founder of a new sect, called afterwards by his name, and teacher also of a new doctrine; new as to the circumstances, and application, though, as to the main substance of it, borrowed from the ebionites before him, or more particularly from the Alogi, a branch of the ebionites^o.

Having seen that Theodotus was an impugner of our Lord's divinity, we are next to observe, that he was condemned immediately by the church for it. He was excommunicated by Victor then bishop of Rome, as an heresiarch.

So

^m Theodotus quidam, Byzantinus genere, denegator Christi Dei nostri in persecutione extitit salvatoris; qui cœpit dicere, docens ita: " Communis homo erat, ut omnes homines, Christus." Philastr. Hær. 50.

Doctrinam introduxit, quâ Christum hominem tantummodo diceret, Deum autem illum negaret. Pseudo Tertullian, C. 53.

ⁿ See Hilary de Trin. L. ii N. 4. p. 789. Epip. Hær. xxx. N. 18. p. 142.

^o Θεοδοτός τις, ἀπίσπασμα ὑπάρχων ἐκ τῆς προειρημένης Ἀλόγου αἰρέσεως. Epiphan. Hær. 54.

So the same Caius relates^a. A sentence approved by the churches of Christ: otherwise Victor himself would have been condemned for it, as he was greatly blamed for misapplying the ecclesiastical censure in a case of another nature, relating to the time for keeping Easter. The churches and bishops of those times were exceeding watchful, and jealous of any abuses of power in particular churches, or men. They were as checks one upon another, that nothing of moment should be done by any, which had not the consent of the rest. This conduct obliged every one to observe the strictest caution in any affair of general concern, and it tended to keep up the exactest harmony and unanimity in the several churches. But I return.

Hippolytus of the third century, takes notice, in passing, of this Theodotus, as a person that falsified the truth, and perverted the scripture, in order to countenance his erroneous doctrine about Christ's being a mere man^r. He compares the heretic Noetus with Theodotus, to make Noetus the more odious for following such a leader in his manner of writing: so that it is plain enough what Hippolytus thought of Theodotus.

The

^a Βίκτωρ τὸν σκυτέα Θεόδοτον, τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ πατέρα ταύτης τῆς ἀρεσιθιῆ ἀποστασίας ἀπεκήρυξε τῆς κοινωνίας—ἀπέβαλε Θεόδοτον τὸν τῆς αἵρεσεως ταύτης εὐρετήν. Euseb. L. v. C. 28. Conf. Theod. Hæret. Fab. L. 2. C. 5.

^r Καὶ ταῦτα βέβηλονται ὅτε διηγείσθαι καὶ αὐτοῖς μονόκωλα χρώμενοι, ὃν τρόπον Θεόδοτος ἄνθρωπον συγῆ᾽ ἄν ψιλὸν βεβήμενος· ἀλλ' ὅτε ἱκεῖνοι τε νενοήκασιν ἀληθείας, ὅθ' ἔτοι, καθὼς αὐταὶ αἱ γραφαὶ ἐλέγχουσιν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀμαθίαν, μαρτυρεῖσθαι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ Hippol. contr. Noet. C. 3. p. 7. Conf. Epiphani. Hær. lvii, 2.

The same Theodotus is numbered also in the list of heretics^s by the writer of the appendix to Tertullian's book of prescription. That appendix is supposed by some^t to be little else but an extract from our Hippolytus's treatise against heresies. However that be, the piece is ancient, and of good value^u. Theodotus is there charged as a blasphemers against Christ, for denying him to be God, though he allowed his birth of a virgin. It was the "God denying" heresy: and therein lay its essential malignity. Had he said, that Christ was an angel, or an archangel, or the highest of all creatures, it would have been treating our Lord with something more of respect; but still it would have come infinitely short of his real dignity, and of the faith of the church concerning him, from the beginning. This I observe, lest any favourer of arianism should falsely surmise, that the censures passed upon Theodotus and such other impugnors of Christ's divinity, do not affect those who make Christ a glorious creature, but those only who suppose him a mere man: whereas, in truth, Theodotus and the rest were condemned for the impugning Christ's proper
and

^s Accedit his Theodotus Byzantius, qui postea quam pro Christi nomine comprehensus negavit, in Christum blasphemare non destitit, doctrinam enim introduxit quâ Christum hominem tantummodo diceret, Deum autem illum negaret: ex Spiritu quidem sancto, natum ex Virgine, sed hominem solitarium atque nudum, nullâ aliâ præ cæteris, nisi solâ justitiæ auctoritate, Pseudo Tertullian, C. 53.

^t Allix. Fathers vindicated touching the Trinity, p. 99.

^u Vid. Dodwell. Dissert. de Success. Pontif. p. 216.

and essential divinity; a fault common to them and the arians, so that both are concluded under the same censure.

I may further add, that the conduct of the church, with respect to the praxeans, noetians, and sabellians, is a demonstration of the truth of what I say. Those men charged the church as teaching three gods^u. Then would have been the time, and must have been, for the church to declare, (had they ever meant it) that the Father only is God, and the Son and Holy Ghost creatures. But they studiously and conscientiously avoided it, as one sees in Hippolytus and Tertullian, and others. And if any man uncautiously, in debate, happened but to let fall any expressions which seemed to lean that way, (as appeared in the famous case of Dionysius of Alexandria) the church of that time would not bear it, but rejected every thing of that kind with abhorrence. They distinguished themselves off from sabellianism, but so as to avoid the other extreme, afterwards called arianism. A plain sign and proof^x that the proper divinity of Christ was what they aimed to support. I may observe also by the way, that the sabellian objection all along supposed and implied, that the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, as well as of the Son, was the then received doctrine. But I return.

There

^u Tertullian, contr. Prax. C. 3. Epiphan. Har. lvii. 62.

^x See this argument excellently drawn out by Mr. Thirlby, Def. of the Answ. p. 36, &c.

There was another Theodotus, surnamed Trapezita (the banker) who was a disciple of the former, and who endeavoured to refine upon this scheme, by the addition of some odd conceits concerning Melchizedec. I shall only observe farther, that as from the elder Theodotus some were named theodotians, so from the junior Theodotus others were called melchizedecians^x.

A. D. 205. *Artemon.*

Artemon, otherwise called Artemas, was a disciple of Theodotus, a reviver or promoter of the same heresy. He appears to have been a very warm man, and of vast assurance; or his followers, at least, were such. For they confidently gave it out, that their doctrine was as old as the apostles^y, and that the doctrine of Christ's divinity began with Pope Zephyrin, that is about A. D. 198. Such ignorance, if it was mere ignorance, was pitiable: but there is too much reason to suspect, that they knew better. The nameless author in Eusebius (supposed to be Caius) well urges^z, that besides the holy scriptures, older than all, there were the works of Justin and Miltiades, of Tatian and Clemens, of Irenæus and Melito, and a great many more, defenders

^x Vid. Euseb. L. v. C. 28. Lequien. not. ad Damasce. Hær. 64. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 6.

^y Euseb. L. v. C. 28. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 4.

^z Euseb. E. H. L. v. C. 28.

defenders of Christ's divinity, directly confronting their wild report, and plainly proving to the world, that it was mere fiction and romance, too improbable to be offered even to the lowest of the populace. And as to their pleading that Pope Victor, the immediate predecessor of Zephyrin, was on their side of the question, he confutes them at once, by observing, that Victor was the very person who had excommunicated Theodotus, their founder and leader, for that very doctrine which they espoused^a. All I have farther to observe of these confident men, is, that they were censured by the church of their time, and not admitted to communion among faithful christians. That may reasonably be inferred from what Caius says, as before mentioned. But it appears further from what passed some years after, in the case of Paul of Samosata, when the antiochian fathers censured him for heresy, and sent him to seek communion, if he pleased, with the artemonians^b, whose sentiments he had taken into, and whose execrable heresy (so they call it^c) he had revived. To which agrees what Athanasius says, speaking of the arian heresy. "This heresy," says he, "was looked upon as detestable, before

^a Ἦσαν δὲ ἔτσι ἀμφω Θεοδότῃ τῷ σκυτίως μαθηταί, τῷ πρώτῳ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ φρονήσει, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀφροσύνῃ, ἀφορισθέντος τῆς κοινωνίας ὑπὸ Βίκτορος, ὡς ἔφην, τῷ τότε ἐπισκόπῳ.

^b Τῷ δὲ Ἀρτεμῶ ἔτος ἐπισέλλετο· καὶ οἱ τὰ Ἀρτεμῶ φρονεῖντες, τέτω κοινωνεῖτωσαν. Euseb. H. E. L. vii. C. 30.

^c Τῇ μιᾷ αἰρέσει τῇ Ἀρτεμῶ. Euseb. ibid.

“ before the council of Nice, when Artemas
“ advanced it^d.”

A. D. 242. *Beryllus*.

Beryllus, bishop of Bostra in Arabia, has been reputed one of those that once denied the divinity of Christ; and therefore Bishop Bull takes him in among the rest^e. But yet strictly speaking, the charge against him was not that he denied the divinity of Christ, but his “ pro-
“ per divinity^f,” by which I understand his personal divinity, or divine personality. For Beryllus’s notion was, that the man Christ Jesus was the whole person, a mere human person, which had indeed a divine person residing in him, viz. the person of the Father. So, Beryllus’s doctrine was a kind of sabellianism; which however in strictness, amounts to a denial of Christ’s divinity. For while it allows him no distinct divine personality, all that remains is, the man Christ with the Father indwelling; which at length resolves into the same doctrine, in the main, with what Cerinthus, Ebion, Theodotus and Artemon taught as to the proper person of Jesus. It is denying his divine sonship, and divine personality, which, in effect, is denying his proper divinity. I the rather note this, because from hence it may appear,
that

^d Περὶ τῆς Νικαίας, ἡ αἵρεσις ἦν βδελυκτὴ, ὅτε ταύτην Ἀρτεμᾶς κατεβάλλετο. Athanas. de Synod. p. 733. Edit. Bened.

^e Bull. Judic. C. 2. p. 305.

^f Μηδὲ μὲν θιόνητα ἰδίαν ἔχον. Euseb. E. H. L. vi. C. 33.

that the church's condemning Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius, as guilty of heresy, proceeded from the same pious zeal for the divinity of Christ, as their condemnation of Cerinthus, Ebion, &c. before: for both were intended to preserve that important article, and to secure the baptismal faith in a real and divine Trinity. Tertullian was sharp enough to see, that the praxean doctrine, under colour of magnifying Christ, by advancing him into the same personality with the Father, in reality left no distinct Son at all, more than the man Jesus, and so fell in with Valentinus's notion, (he might have said, Cerinthus's also) which separated Jesus from Christ, dividing them into two persons^g. All the difference is, that Cerinthus, or Valentinus supposed the Christ from above to be some æon, or inferior power residing, occasionally, with the man Jesus; while the praxeans substituted God the Father instead of that supposed æon, making him the Christ from above, conceived to inhabit at times the same man Jesus. Which, as it comes very near the old ebionite notion, so is it exactly the same with what

^g Undique enim obducti distinctione Patris et Filii—aliter eam ad suam nihilominus sententiam interpretari conantur: ut æque in unâ personâ utrumque distinguant Patrem et Filium; dicentes Filium carnem esse, id est hominem, id est Jesum; Patrem autem Spiritum, id est Deum, id est Christum. Et qui unum eundemque contendunt Patrem et Filium, jam incipiunt dividere illos potius quam unare. Si enim alius est Jesus, alius Christus, alius erit Filius, alius Pater; quia Filius Jesus, et Pater Christus. Talem monarchiam apud Valentinum fortasse didicerunt, duos facere Jesum et Christum. Tertul. adv. Prax. C. 27.

what several of the foreign focinians, and most of our English ones have maintained in late times. Indeed, the praxeans were charged as patripassians, which is a charge that does not affect the modern focinians: but I apprehend, from the passage of Tertullian just cited, that the praxeans, to get off from patripassianism, learned at length to divide the persons of Father and Son, and then the Father could be considered only as inhabiting Jesus*, a mere man, and a distinct person from him. Sabellianism, and photinianism, and focinianism, do in reality come at length into one; all resolving into judaism: for the fundamental error of them all is the denying the divine sonship, and personal divinity of Christ; rejecting the eternal substantial Logos, who was with the Father before the world was, and is God from everlasting to everlasting. I say then, that the zeal shewn by the ancient church against the sabellians of all denominations, (as well as their zeal against the more direct impugnors of Christ's divinity) is a very strong argument of their judging the doctrine of a coeternal Trinity to be an essential of the gospel. They intended much the same thing by animadverting upon those, or these; for they saw plainly, that the divinity of Christ, considered as a real person, was as much undermined by sabellianism, as it was attacked by the other. Many and various have been
the

* Conf. Athanas. T. 2. p. 39. Epiphani. lxxv. 614.

the ways of evading and eluding these two prime verities, viz. That three real persons are one God, and that God and man is one Christ. But watchful and honest christians still kept their eyes fixed upon those sacred truths, and would never admit any doctrine as true, which was contrary to them, or as sufficient, that was short of them. If any one denied Christ's humanity (as the docetæ, or phantasiastæ) that was manifestly false doctrine, to be rejected at once: but if another admitted his humanity and stopped there, that was short and insufficient. If it was added (as by Cerinthus) that a celestial substance or spirit rested sometimes upon Jesus, that was true, but still short of the whole truth in more respects than one. If it were said, constantly residing, that was better, but still very insufficient. If to that were added, personally united, that came nearer up to the full truth, but still was evasive, and short. Say, "divine substance personally" united with the human: that comes nearer to the point than any of the former; but still there is room for evasion, because it might mean the Father; and then it amounts to sabellianism only, and patripassianism. Add therefore, that such divine substance is personally distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit, and then it is confessing three real and divine persons in one Godhead, which is the whole truth. The several kinds of heresies which have affected this scripture truth, are but the various wan-

drings of human imagination. Truth is simple and uniform, while error is almost infinite. But I return to Beryllus.

The error which Beryllus unhappily split upon, was the denying a real distinction of divine persons, as I before observed; which in direct consequence made Christ Jesus a mere man, in whom the Father dwelt. The bishops of the neighbouring sees were alarmed at the doctrine, and met in synod to condemn the heresy, and the teacher of it. But the great Origen being called in to debate and clear the point in question, Beryllus was made sensible of his error, and being a person of a pious and an humble mind, he honestly retracted it^h. And it is farther to be observed, that he loved his instructor Origen ever after, and was sincerely thankful to himⁱ for affording him so much new light (new to him) in a question of the greatest importance. A rare example of godly sincerity, and true christian humility. His mistake had shewn some weakness of judgment; but his recovery manifested great strength of mind, and a good command over himself and his own passions.

A. D. 265. *Paul of Samosata.*

Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, was of a temper and character very different from
what

^h Euseb. E. H. Lib. vi. C. 33.

ⁱ Hieronym, Eccl. Script. lxx. p. 138. Edit. Fabric.

what we have mentioned in the last article. He gave the churches fresh occasion for exerting their pious zeal in behalf of our Lord's divinity. He was impeached for heresy in a council of Antioch, A. D. 265. and distinguished himself off at that time, and escaped without censure; but in another council, A. D. 270. he was again accused, and convicted, and thereupon deposed. He is charged by the council which condemned him, with receiving the heresy of Artemon, with denying his Lord and God, with disowning any Son of God from heaven, preaching up a detestable heresy, a damnable doctrine, and the like^k. The sum of his heresy, upon comparing the best accounts, appears to be this: That there is but one real person in the Godhead, viz. the Father^l; that the Logos is a mere attribute, quality, power, or operation, nothing real and substantial^m; and that Christ, as it follows of consequence, is a mere manⁿ. His scheme appears to have been, in substance, little different from the sabellian^o: but the stress of the charge against him rested upon this, that he had denied his Lord's divinity; and therefore his heresy was

^k Euseb. E. H. L. vii. C. 30.

^l Vid. Athanas. contr. Apollinar. p. 942. Epiphan. Hær. lxxv.

1, 3.

^m Epiphan. Hær. lxxv. 1. Philastr. lxiv. p. 126.

ⁿ Euseb. E. H. L. vii. C. 27. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii.

p. 223. Augustin. Hær. 44. Damascen. Hæres. lxxv.

^o See my first Defence, Q. xxiii. p. 352. Second Def. p. 460. alias p. 465. Dr. Berriman's Historical Account, p. 144, &c.

was called, like Theodotus's and Artemon's before, the god denying wickedness^p.

A. D. 317. *Arius*.

I cannot well conclude the view of antiquity, with respect to the heresies against Christ's divinity, without throwing in a word or two about the famous Arius, and his condemnation for proclaiming God the Son a creature, therein denying his Lord's real and proper divinity, as much as any before him. Alexander, then bishop of Alexandria, in his epistle to the other Alexander of Byzantium, or Constantinople, (about A. D. 321.) charges the arians with denying their Saviour's divinity^q, and with reviving the heresy of Ebion, Artemon, and Paul of Samosata^r. Not that the arian scheme was exactly the same with any of those three (for there are degrees of variation from truth, and many wrong ways to one right) but it fell in with them all in the main thing, and in which the principal malignity of their heresies consisted, namely, in the rejecting the true Godhead of Christ. I shall say nothing of the synodical censures passed upon Arius and his adherents, at the first opening of the heresy. In the year 325, he was condemned, in more solemn form, by the famous council of Nice, by 318 bishops called from all parts of the christian world,

seventeen

^p Ἀρρησθέντος κακίας, Euseb. L. vii. C. 29.

^q Theodorit. Eccl. Hist. C. iv. p. 9. Edit. Vales.

^r Theodorit. ibid. p. 14.

seventeen only of the number scrupling it for a time, and at last, two only or three dissenting. They condemned his sentiments, as amounting to impiety, madness, blasphemy, such as they almost trembled to hear^s; which appears by the council's letter after his condemnation. Their sentence in that cause carried the greater weight in it, as the council was general, called together out of Europe, Asia, and Africa, from all parts of the empire^t; as it was upon the matter free, and under no secular awe or influences; and lastly, as it was made up of the wisest, worthiest, and every way excellent prelates^u which the christian world could then furnish. The determination of so venerable a council gave a considerable check to arianism, and always carried great force with it; though it did not so quash the controversy as finally to put an end to it, any more than the council of the apostles at Jerusalem^x (A. D. 49.) put an end to the dispute about the necessity of imposing circumcision^y. But as that first council had its use in the church, and very great use, notwithstanding the repeated oppositions made to it, so had this other also, and has to this day. Divine wisdom has appointed no cer-
tain

^s Ἄπαντα ἀναθιμάτισεν ἡ ἁγία σύνοδος, ἐδὲ ὅσον ἀκῶσαι τῆς αἰσχρῆς δόξης, ἡ ἀπειροίας, καὶ τῶν βλασφημῶν ῥημάτων ἀνασχέ-
μειν. Apud Socr. L. i. C. 9.

^t Euseb. de Vit. Constantin. L. iii. C. 7.

^u Euseb. de Vit. Constantin. L. iii. C. 9.

^x Acts xv.

^y See Buddeus, Eccl. Apost. p. 114, 294, &c.

tain effective remedies for the perverseness of man, but has provided sufficient means for the instruction and direction of the humble, and modest, and well designing.

Some persons have suggested, that the council of Ariminum (held in 359) consisting of 400 bishops or more^z, may properly be mentioned on the other side, as a counterbalance to the council of Nice. But there is no comparison betwixt them, when the circumstances are duly considered. For, 1. The council of Rimini, or Ariminum, was not general, being of the West only. 2. It was not free, being greatly menaced, distressed, and overawed by the emperor Constantius^a. 3. Out of the number of 400, there were but 80 arians^b, at the most: the other 320, or more, were really orthodox men, induced by artifices to subscribe a creed which they understood in a good sense^c, but which, being worded in general terms, was capable of being perverted to a bad one. The deep dissimulation at that time used by the arian managers, procured them the advantage only of a short lived triumph. For no sooner did the orthodox side perceive how they had been imposed

^z Athanas. de Synod. 720, 749. Sulpic. Sever. p. 267. Socr. E. H. L. iv. C. 17.

^a Athanas. ad Afros, 892, 893. Socrat. E. H. L. 2. C. 37. Sozom. L. iv. C. 19. Hilar. Pictav. 1242. Ed. Bened.

^b Ariani non amplius quam octoginta: reliqui nostrarum partium erant. Sulpic. Sever. L. ii. C. 56.

^c Sonabant verba pietatem, et inter tanta mella præconii, nemo venenum insertum putabat. Hieron. contr. Lucifer.

imposed upon, and what use was to be made of it, but they declared to the world their own good meaning, and the perfidiousness of the opposite party. But of this I have treated more largely elsewhere^d. It is of that time that St. Jerome speaks, when he pleasantly says, that the whole christian world groaned (*viz.* under the slander thrown upon them by their adversaries) and wondered that she was arian^e: that is to say, they wondered at the assurance of the arians, in so imposing upon the catholics, and in representing them to be the very reverse of what they really were^f. The learned Mr. Bingham understood these matters well, and has expressed them justly and fully in these few lines^g. “The
 “ arians put an equivocal and poisonous sense
 “ upon them (the words of the council) giv-
 “ ing out, after the council was ended, that
 “ they had not only abolished the word “con-
 “ substantial,” but with it condemned the
 “ nicene faith also: which was strange sur-
 “ prising news to the bishops that had been
 “ at Ariminum. Then says St. Jerome, Inge-
 “ nuit totus orbis, et arianum se esse miratus
 est:

^d Defence Q. xxix. p. 468, 469. Answer to Whitby, p. 19. Compare Berriman's *Hist. Account*, p. 228, &c.

^e *Ingenit totus orbis, et arianum se esse miratus est.* Hier. *contr. Lucifer.* p. 300.

^f *Concurrebant episcopi, qui ariminenfibus dolis irretiti, sine conscientia hæretici ferebantur, contestantes Corpus Domini, et quicquid in ecclesia sanctum est, se nihil mali in sua fide suspicatos.* Hieron. *ibid.* 301.

^g Bingham's *Antiquities*, B. vi. C. 3. f. 10. Compare Dr. Berriman, *Hist. Acc.* p. 228, &c.

est: "The whole world groaned, and was amazed to think she should be reputed arian." That is, the catholic bishops of the whole world (for there were 300^h of them present at the council) were amazed to find themselves so abused, and represented as arian, when they never intended in the least to confirm the arian doctrine." But as to the extent of the nicene faith, both at that time, and after, I have spoken more particularly of it elsewhere¹, and need not here repeat. Only, the reader may permit me to sum up the whole in the same words, or nearly as before. "There never was a council on the arian side so free, so large, so in every respect unexceptionable as the council of Nice was. But whatever opposition was made to it, was carried on with such wiles and subtleties and refined artifices, (to say nothing of cruelties) as every honest man would be ashamed of: and notwithstanding all that the arians could do, they were not able long to maintain

^b He might have said, 320. But I believe, Jerome meant more than that 320 by the *totus orbis*. He meant all the orthodox; for all of them suffered in the slander raised against their brethren, most of them as orthodox as themselves: so it affected them all, and all were amazed at the injurious aspersions. This place therefore of Jerome, rightly understood, is so far from saying, that the whole world was then arian, that it is saying the contrary; namely, that the whole world was anti-arian. For by *totus orbis* he manifestly there means the orthodox, who had been slandered as arian, and were really antiarian. They were the *whole world* in his account, the arians being but few in comparison.

¹ Defence, Q. xxix. p. 468—472. Second Defence, p. 464. second edit. Conf. Basil. T. 3. p. 307. Bened.

“tain their ground; but the men who sustained the flock, and kept up the credit of the nicene faith, were not only the most numerous, but appear to have been as wise, and as judicious, and as pious men as ever the church was adorned with since the times of the apostles^k.”

From what has been said under the present article, it is manifest, that the impugnors of our Lord's divinity have been all along condemned as guilty of heresy for the first three centuries and more; so that as far as the constant judgment and practice of the church in their decrees and censures, during that time, can be conceived to bear weight, the doctrine of our Lord's true and proper divinity, and of consequence, the doctrine of a real and coeternal Trinity, must be looked upon as a fundamental of the christian faith.

III. Besides what has been pleaded upon the first topic relating to creeds, and upon the second relating to heretics; there is yet a third head to go upon, namely, the sentiments of antenicene fathers, such as they have occasionally delivered in their writings, distinct from what they have reported either of creeds or heresies. And these are what I am next going to produce, according to order of time, to shew what they thought of the necessity or importance of faith in the ever blessed

^k See this council defended more at large by Dr. Berriman in his Remarks on Mr. Chandler, p. 19—42. And in his Review of the Remarks, p. 28—41.

bleſſed Trinity. Perhaps, I may have anticipated ſome things under the laſt head, which might properly have come in here; or I may chance to take ſome things in here, which might properly have come in there. But it is of no great moment which head they are brought under, ſo long as both center in the ſame concluſion, and the two parts may be conſidered as ſupplemental to each other.

107. *Ignatius.*

I begin with Ignatius, who writes thus: “ Be
 “ not led aſide by ſtrange doctrines, nor by an-
 “ tiquated tales, which are unprofitable. For
 “ if we yet live according to judaiſm, it is
 “ much as declaring that we have not accepted
 “ grace^l; for the moſt holy prophets lived ac-
 “ cording to Chriſt Jeſus. And for that cauſe
 “ were they perſecuted, being inſpired by his
 “ grace, that the unbelievers might be con-
 “ vinced that there is one God who hath ma-
 “ niſteſted himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt his Son, who
 “ is his eternal word, not proceeding from fi-
 “ lence^m, who in all things pleaſed him that
 “ ſent him.” The judaizing heretics, (whether
 cerinthians, or ebionites, or gnoſtics at large) are
 the perſons here pointed at, without diſputeⁿ;
 and

^l Εἰ γὰρ μέχρι νῦν κατὰ [νόμον] Ἰουδαϊσμὸν ζῶμεν, ὁμολογοῦμεν χάριν μὴ εἰληφέναι. Ignat. ad Magnes. f. viii.

^m Τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ὅς ἐστιν αὐτοῦ λόγος αἰδώς, ἐκ ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών, ibid.

ⁿ Hæc eſt ſecunda hujus epiſtolæ pars, quæ eos maxime præmunit contra hæreticos, eos præcipue qui judaiſmum introducere cona-

and the judaism here principally charged was, their denial of Christ's real and eternal divinity. The jews would not own a proper Son of God°, an eternal subsisting Logos, but pertinaciously disputed that point with the christians; as may appear sufficiently, besides other evidences, from Justin's celebrated dialogue with Trypho. So here we may observe, how emphatically Ignatius expresses the christian faith in opposition to those judaizers, by asserting Christ to be God's Son, and his eternal Word, not proceeding from silence, as those judaizers taught. I forbear to enter into the dispute about *συνη*, which has been already exhausted by Bishop Pearson, Bishop Bull, and other learned men. What I am most concerned to observe is, that judaism was the common and just reproach thrown upon all the impugnors, or underminers of Christ's divinity. For that was part of the distinguishing character of the christian faith, as opposed to the jewish, in those days^p. As to Cerinthus

and

conabantur; contra quos clare et expresse disputat. Erant autem ii ea tempestate, qui divinam Christi naturam negabant, ut Ebionitæ, Cerinthiani, Nazaræi, et Helxaitæ. Pearson Not. in loc. p. 43. Conf. Vindic. p. 55.

° *Ἰουδαῖος δὲ ἐκ αὐτῶν ὁμολογῆσαι, ὅτι προφῆτης τις εἶπεν ἔξαι θεῷ υἱόν.* Origen. contr. Cels. L. i. p. 38.

’*Οὐ πάντι Ἰουδαῖοι λέγουσι θεὸν ὄντα τὸν χριστὸν καταδόξασθαι ἢ θεῷ υἱόν.* Ibid. L. iv. p. 162.

’*Εγὼ δὲ καὶ πολλοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ σοφοῖς γε ἑπαγγελλομένοις εἶναι συμβαλὼν, εἰδὸς ἀκήκοα ἑπαινῆτος τὸν λόγον εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ κέλους ἱερεῖ.* Ibid. C. 2. p. 79.

^p I say, in those days. For, that the ancients jews were generally in like sentiments, is not probable, but the contrary. Of which see “Allix’s Judgment of the Jewish Church.” And
“Considerations

and Ebion, the early impugnors of Christ's divinity, it is well known that they were judaizers, and brought their heresy along with them, transplanting it from the synagogue to the church. Those that followed them in their heresy, were judged so far to desert the christian cause, and to side with the jews. Tertullian, though directly pointing to Praxeas, yet makes the charge general against all that deny a real and divine Trinity¹. Novatian passes the like censure upon as many as denied Christ's divinity². Theodotus, though a gentile christian, is charged with jewish blindness upon the same score³. Paul of Samosata is observed to have given up Christ's divinity in complaisance to jews⁴. And the arians afterwards, on the same account, are frequently censured by orthodox christians, as revivers of judaism⁵.

I now return to Ignatius, who after charging those impugnors of Christ's divinity with judaism,

"Considerations on Mr. Whiston's historical Preface," p. 75, &c. And "Primitive Christianity vindicated," p. 17, &c. And Stillingsfleet on the Trinity, C. 9. p. 203, &c.

¹ *Judaicæ fidei est res, sic unum Deum credere, ut Filium adnumerare ei nolis, et post Filium Spiritum—Pater et Filius et Spiritus unum Deum sistunt.* Tertul. adv. Prax. C. 31.

² *Ignari et imperiti Judæi hæredes sibi hæreticos istos reddiderunt.* Novat. C. 15. ed. Welchm. alias C. 23.

³ *Cæcitatibus Judaicæ confers.* Philastr. Hær. 50. Conf. Epiph. Hær. 54. 5.

⁴ *Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 8. Athanas. Vol. 1. p. 386. Epiph. Hær. lxxv. 2, 7. Philastr. Hær. lxxiv.*

⁵ *Athanas. de Decret. Synod. N. p. 209, 233. Orat. 2. 484. Basil. Homil. xxiv. Tom. ii. p. 189. Ed. Bened. Greg. Nyssen. contr. Eunom. Orat. i. p. 15.*

judaism, intimates their thereby forfeiting the grace of the gospel. Then he proceeds to lay down the true christian doctrine of a Son of God, an eternal Word, not produced in time, or from silence^a. And since he asserts that the denial of that doctrine is judaizing, and is renouncing the grace of the gospel, it amounts to declaring that the article of Christ's divinity is an essential of christianity.

A. D. 155. *Justin Martyr.*

Justin Martyr, in a fragment produced by Dr. Grabe, lays a very particular stress upon the article of Christ's divinity, as the reconciliation of God and man is nearly concerned in it. The passage runs thus: "When man's nature had
 " contracted corruption, it was necessary that he
 " who would save it, should do away the prin-
 " ciple of corruption. But this could not be
 " done without uniting life by nature [or essential
 " life] with the nature so corrupted, to do away
 " the corruption, and to immortalize the corrupt
 " nature ever after. Wherefore it was meet that
 " the word should become incarnate to deliver us
 " from the death of natural corruption^b."

Here

^a Simplicissima et optima sententia videtur, quod Ignatius, contra omnes veteres hæreticos Filii æternitatem negantes, asseruerit Christum non esse instar humani verbi quod post silentium prodit, sed Verbum Patri coæternum. Ittigius Hist. Eccl. Sæc. 2^{di}, p. 118.

^b Φύσει δὲ τῆς φθορᾶς προσγενομένης, ἀναγκαῖον ἦν ὅτι σωταὶ βε-
 λόμενος ἢ τὴν φθοροποιὸν εἰσίαν ἀφανίσας· τὸτο δὲ ἔκ ἦν ἑτέρως
 γινώσθαι

Here Justin asserts, that it was necessary for essential life, (or life by nature) to be united with human nature, in order to save it: which is the same as to say, that it was necessary for God to become incarnate, in order to save lost man. So important did he take that article to be, conceiving that the redemption of mankind depended upon it. The phrase of life by nature undoubtedly imports necessary existence, and proper divinity, as I have observed and proved upon another occasion^c, and need not here do again. Bishop Bull brings some other passages from Justin of like import with this. But for brevity sake, I chuse to pass them over, and am content only to refer^d.

A. D. 176. *Irenæus.*

Irenæus has said much the same thing with Justin, in fuller and stronger words. After observing that the Son of God and Word of the Father became man, that he might give salvation to his own creature, or workmanship^e, he proceeds as follows: “Therefore, as I said
“before,

γενέσθαι εἰ μήπερ ἡ κατὰ φύσιν ζωὴ προσεπλάκη τῷ τὴν φθορὰν δεξ-
αμένῳ, ἀφανίζουσα μὲν τὴν φθορὰν, ἀθανατὸν δὲ τῷ λοιπῷ τὸ δεξά-
μενον διατηρῶσα· διὰ τῆτο τὸν Λόγον ἐδέχθει ἐν σώματι γενέσθαι,
ἵνα τῷ θανάτῳ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἡμᾶς φθορᾶς ἐλευθερώσῃ. *Grab.*
Spicileg. Vol. ii. p. 17. Et in notis ad Bull. *Judic.* C. 7. f. 5.
P. 344.

^c Second Defence, p. 265, alias 270. Compare third Defence, p. 110.

^d Bull *Judic.* C. 7. f. 5. p. 344, 345.

^e Bonus vere Filius Dei et patiens, Verbum Dei Patris, Filius hominis factus.—Salutem donavit plasmati suo, destruens peccatum: est enim piissimus et misericors Dominus, et amans humanum genus. *Iren.* L. iii. C. 18. alias 20.

“ before, he united man to God. For if it
 “ were not man that should overcome the ad-
 “ versary of man, the enemy would not have
 “ been rightly vanquished; and again, if it
 “ were not God to give the salvation, we could
 “ not be firmly possessed of it. Besides, if man
 “ had not been united to God, he could never
 “ have been partaker of incorruption. So it was
 “ meet that a mediator between God and man,
 “ should bring both together into amity and
 “ concord by his own proximity to both; that
 “ so he might present man to God, and no-
 “ tify God to men^f.” What we have here
 to observe is, that if Irenæus believed it neces-
 sary for God to become man, in order to work
 man’s salvation, he must of consequence judge
 the article of Christ’s divinity (in his high sense
 of divinity) an essential of christian faith, ne-
 cessary to be believed by all to whom it should
 be revealed, under pain of forfeiting the benefit
 of it. Irenæus’s constant way of reasoning in
 other places, shews that he always carried
 that conclusion in his mind. And indeed he
 goes but one page farther on, before he for-
 mally draws it, in these strong and empha-
 tical

^f Ἦνωσεν ὅν, καθὼς προείφαμεν, τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῷ Θεῷ· εἰ γὰρ μὴ
 ἄνθρωπος ἐνίκησεν τὸν ἀντίπαλον τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἢ καὶ δικαίως ἐνίκηθη ὁ
 ἔχθρὸς· πάλιν τε, εἰ μὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἐδωρήσατο τὴν σωτηρίαν, ἢ καὶ βί-
 βαιῶς ἐσχομεν αὐτήν· καὶ εἰ μὴ συνηνῶθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῷ Θεῷ, ἢ καὶ
 ἡδυνήθη μετασχεῖν αἰσχροσύνης· ἔδει γὰρ τὸν μεσίτην Θεῷ τε καὶ
 ἀνθρώπῳ, διὰ τῆς ἰδίας πρὸς ἑκατέρου οἰκειότητος, εἰς φιλίαν καὶ
 ὁμόνοιαν τὰς ἀμφοτέρων συναγαγεῖν, καὶ Θεῷ μὲν παραστήσαι τὸν
 ἄνθρωπον, ἀνθρώποις δὲ γνωρίσαι τὸν Θεόν. Irenæus, *ibid*.

tical words^g: “ They who make [Jesus] a mere
 “ man begotten of Joseph, remaining under
 “ the bondage of the first disobedience, are in
 “ a dead state, inasmuch as they are not yet
 “ conjoined with the word of God the Father,
 “ nor have received freedom by the Son: ac-
 “ cording to what himself says; *If the Son*
 “ *shall make you free, you shall be free indeed*^h.
 “ While they acknowledge not him who of
 “ the virgin is Emmanuel [God with us] they
 “ forfeit the benefit of it, which is life eter-
 “ nal. While they admit not the word of in-
 “ corruption, they continue in mortal flesh,
 “ and are bound over to death, for want of
 “ receiving the antidote of life.” This excel-
 lent writer has a great deal more to the same
 purpose in the same chapter. But what I have
 cited, may suffice for a summary view of his
 sentiments on this head. It is observable, that
 according to him, the not receiving the Emma-
 nuel as Emmanuel, that is, as “ God incarnate,”
 is in effect throwing up the privileges of it,
 (viz. life eternal) and is remaining under the do-
 minion of death and hell. Nothing can be
 stronger

^g Qui nude tantum hominem eum dicunt ex Joseph genera-
 tum, perseverantes in servitute pristinae inobedientiae, moriun-
 tur; nondum commixti Verbo Dei Patris, neque per Filium re-
 cipientes libertatem, quemadmodum ipse ait: *si Filius vos manu-*
miserit, vere liberi eritis. Ignorantes autem eum qui ex virgine
 est Emmanuel, privantur *munere ejus*, quod est *vita aeterna*. Non
 recipientes autem Verbum incorruptionis, perseverant in carne
 mortali; et sunt debitores mortis, antidotum vitae non accipi-
 entes. Iren. Lib. iii. C. 19, alias C. 21.

^h John viii. 36.

stronger for the importance of the article of Christ's divinity; especially if this passage be compared with the author's high and just sense of the name Emmanuel, importing that Christ is substantially, or essentially, God in one nature, as he is man in anotherⁱ. I know not whether I again need to take notice (having twice before done it^k) how Irenæus here mixes the two questions about the birth of a virgin, and about the Lord's divinity, as amounting to one, upon the foot of the then present controversies. For the point then in question was, whether Christ was conceived in the common way of human generation, or whether the divine Logos coming upon the virgin, superseded and excluded human means? The question being so stated, the asserting a divine Logos in Christ, was of course asserting the birth of a virgin; as the denying the birth of a virgin was of course denying any personal union of the Logos with man. Thus the two questions, at that time, resolved in a manner into one: which is the reason, as I hinted before, of their being intermingled together.

A. D.

ⁱ Diligentur igitur significavit Spiritus Sanctus per ea quæ dicta sunt, generationem ejus quæ est ex virgine, et substantiam quoniam Deus (Emmanuel enim nomen hoc significat) et manifestat quoniam homo, in eo quod dicit, &c. Iren. L. iii. C. 21. alias 26.

^k Οἱ τὸν ἐκ τῆς παρθένου Ἐμμανουὴλ κηρύττοντες, τὴν ἕνωσιν τῆς λόγου τῆς θεῆς πρὸς τὸ πλάσμα αὐτῆς ἐδήλουν. quoniam Verbum caro erit, et Filius Dei Filius hominis—et hoc factus quod et nos, *Deus fortis est*, et inenarrabile habet genus. Iren. L. iv. C. 33. alias 66.

^k See above, p. 304, 308.

A. D. 177. *Athenagoras.*

Athenagoras in his apology for the christian religion, written at this time¹, has more passages than one^m, which plainly prove his belief of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. But as to the necessity, or the importance of such faith, he had the less occasion to speak particularly, or to press it with any earnestness, since his immediate concern was not with heretics, or with jews, but with pagans only. Nevertheless, he occasionally drops some expressions, which intimate his high veneration for that sublime and tremendous doctrine, and shew how much it concerned christians, to make it the subject of their most serious thoughts, and most devout meditations. Speaking of christians, he describes themⁿ “ as men that made small account of
“ the present life, but were intent only upon
“ contemplating God°, and knowing his word
“ who

¹ See Mosheim, *Observat. Sacr. C.* 4.

^m Vid. *Bull. Defens. F. N. f. ii. C. 4.* p. 67, alias 71. Dr. Bishop's *Sermons*, p. 186, &c. *Nourri. Apparat. ad Bibl. Max.* Vol. 1. p. 487, &c. *My Sermons*, p. 301. *Second Defence*, 72—78, 266, &c.

ⁿ "Ἀνθρώποι δὲ, τὸν μὲν ἐνταῦθα ὀλίγη καὶ μικρὴ τινος ἄξιον βίον λελογισμένοι, ὑπὸ μόνῃ δὲ παραπεμπόμενοι τέττε, ὃν ἴσως [forte νοήσασθαι] θεὸν καὶ τὸν πατρὶ αὐτῷ λόγον εἰδέναι, τίς ἢ τῷ παιδὶ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἐνότης, τίς ἢ τῷ πατρὶ πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν κοινωνία, τί τὸ πνεῦμα, τίς ἢ τῶν τρεῶν ἑνώσις καὶ διαίρεσις ἐνθυμένων, τῷ πνεύματος, τῷ παιδὶ, τῷ πατρὶ. *Athenag. Legat. L. xi. p. 46.* Edit. Ox.

° *Νοήσασθαι*, for ἐν ἴσως, is an emendation of a learned foreigner, Godfr. Olearius in his *Dissertat. Theolog. de Spiritu S. cum Patre et Filio adoratione*, contr. Gul. Whiston, A. D. 1711, p. 2. The emendation has been taken notice of before by Dr. Bishop, *Sermons*, p. 188.

“ who is from him; what union the Son has with
 “ the Father, what communion the Father has
 “ with the Son; what the Spirit is, and what
 “ the union and distinction are of such so united,
 “ the Spirit, the Son, and the Father.” From
 hence we may infer how important a doctrine
 that of the Trinity, as understood by Athenago-
 ras (the same as we understand at this day) was
 conceived to be, that the then christians made
 it one principal concern of their lives, to con-
 template and adore the three divine persons. I
 say, adore: for though that is not expressed in
 this passage, it is undoubtedly implied, and is
 the express doctrine of the author in other
 places^b. Thus much we may undoubtedly collect
 from the present passage, that mysteries of faith
 were not then thought barren speculations, or
 matters of slight concernment. The reflection
 of a learned foreigner hereupon, is very just
 and proper, and I shall give it the reader in
 the margin^c, as an useful comment upon this
 para-

^b Athenag. C. x. p. 40. xxvi. p. 122.

^c Quanquam in primis Christianismi temporibus id cum pri-
 mis gloriæ sibi duxerint fidei nostræ sanctissimæ professores,
 quod non meditatione verborum, sed demonstratione et insti-
 tutione operum christianam rem absolvi profiterentur; non ta-
 men ista Praxis sacra ita fuit a Theoriâ doctrinæ christianæ sepa-
 rata, ut non mysteria etiam fidei, a quorum rectâ cognitione
 divini numinis cultus, tum vitæ de reliquo recte instituendæ ratio
 penderent, non temere quidem, sed neque tamen perfunctorie
 scrutarentur. — Etenim qui in primis christianismi initiis, inque
 ipso adeo *φωτισμῷ* suo, accepissent Fidem in Patrem, Filium, et
 Spiritum S. eaque nomina perpetuo in ore haberent, eos sane
 oportebat eo contendere, ut crescerent in omni plenitudine sci-
 entię de mysterio tam augusto tamque venerando. Godfr. Olear.
 in Dissertat. p. 1, 2.

paragraph of Athenagoras. I proceed to other ecclesiastical writers in their order.

A. D. 209. *Tertullian.*

Tertullian has some very remarkable expressions relating to the faith of the church in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, as being the sum and substance of the gospel, the very life and spirit of the christian religion. I have cited part of the passage before, but shall now give it intire. “It is mere judaism, to believe one God in such a sense as not to reckon the Son to him, and after the Son, the Spirit. For wherein is the great difference between them and us, except it be in this article? What is it that the gospel has done, what is the substance of the New Testament, extending the law and the prophets as far as John, if from thence forwards, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons, are not believed to make one God^d?” I have taken a little liberty in translating, just enough to keep the English up, and not to alter the sense. Three persons is barely a literal rendering of tres, in that place, which cannot be otherwise so well expressed

^d Cæterum Judaicæ fidei est res, sic unum Deum credere, ut Filium adnupierare ei nolis, et post Filium, Spiritum. Quid enim inter nos et illos, nisi differentia ista? Quod opus evangelii? Quæ est substantia novi Testamenti statuens legem et prophetas usque ad Johannem, si non exinde Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus, tres crediti, unum Deum sistunt? Tertul. adv. Prax. C. 31. p. 102. Edit. Welchm.

expressed in English. Besides, the word *persona*, for the same thing, is common in Tertullian^e. As to what concerns the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is impossible to invent any thing fuller or stronger, in so few words, than this passage. I am sensible it will be pleaded in bar to his evidence, that he was a montanist. The fact is true, but there is no argument at all in it, as has been often shewn by learned men; but more particularly by the learned and judicious Mr. Welchman^f, in his late very correct edition of the treatise against Praxeas. Tertullian was no montanist in 198. But it has been sufficiently proved, both by Mr. Welchman and Mosheim, that his apology (which contains the same doctrine) was as early as that year.

A. D. 256. *Cyprian.*

St. Cyprian has a remarkable passage, which speaks full and close to our purpose. Arguing for the invalidity of heretical baptisms, he asks, how any persons baptized by heretics, and thereby partaking in their heresy (so he must mean) can be presumed to obtain remission of sins, and to become the temple of God? “ If he be thereby made the temple of God, I would ask, of what God [or, “ divine

^e Tertull. contr. Prax. C. xi. p. 32, 34. xii. 35, 37.

^f Welchman. Præfat. ad Tertul. contr. Prax. p. 5-13. Conf. Mosheim, Disquis. Chronologico crit. de verâ ætate Apologetici a Tertulliano conscripti.

“divine person] it is? Is it of [God] the
 “creator? He could not be so, if he believed
 “not in him. Is it of Christ? Neither can
 “he be his temple, while he denies Christ to
 “be God. Is it then of the Holy Ghost?
 “But since the three are one, how can the
 “Holy Ghost have friendship with Him that
 “is at enmity with either Father or Son^f?”
 Here it is observable, 1. That St. Cyprian gives
 the name or title of God, to each of the divine
 persons. 2. That to deny Christ to be God,
 is interpretatively excluding one’s self from Christ,
 and declaring enmity towards all the three,
 who are one. 3. That therefore the acknow-
 ledging Christ to be God, is necessary to sal-
 vation, and the impugning that doctrine is de-
 structive of it. Consequently, one is a funda-
 mental article of faith, and the other a fundamental
 error. So far is plain. And now if there re-
 mains any room for dispute, it can only be
 about the true and full meaning of the word
 God, in this place. But Cyprian’s declaring
 that salvation depends upon the article, is a
 strong presumption that he understood the word
 in its just and proper sense. His applying it
 indifferently to all the three persons, without
 any

^f Si peccatorum remissionem consecutus est et sanctificatus
 est, et templum Dei factus est, quæro, cujus Dei? Si Creatoris,
 non potuit qui in eum non credidit. Si Christi, nec hujus fieri
 potest templum, qui negat Deum Christum. Si Spiritus Sancti,
 cum tres unum sint, quomodo Spiritus Sanctus placatus esse ei
 potest, qui aut Patris, aut Filii inimicus? Cyprian. Ep. 73. ad
 Jubaian. p. 203. Edit. Oxon.

any mark of distinction, is a further presumption of the same thing. His saying, that the *three are one* [*unum*] one substance, one thing, makes it still plainer. And lastly, his applying the title of God to the Son, in the strictest and highest sense, in the other parts of his works, sets it beyond dispute^h. I may observe by the way, of Cyprian, as I have before hinted of other fathers, that he went upon this maxim, that whosoever shall disbelieve the doctrines of salvation revealed to mankind, shall have no part in the salvation so tendered to them, ordinarily, at least.

A. D. 257. *Novatian.*

Novatian expresses the same thought in very clear and strong terms. “If God the Father
“saves none but through God, then no one can
“be saved by God the Father, who does not confess that Christ is God; in whom, and by whom,
“the Father promises to give salvation. Wherefore, very justly, whosoever acknowledges him
“to be God, is in the way to be saved by Christ
“who is God; and whosoever doth not acknowledge him to be God, forfeits salvation, because
“he cannot otherwise have it but in Christ as Godⁱ.”

Words

^h The passages are collected in Bishop Bull, D. F. N. sect. ii. C. 10. p. 119, &c. And in my Defence, Q. ii. p. 29, &c. Second Defence, Q. ii. p. 148. alias p. 153.

ⁱ Si non salvat nisi in Deo Pater Deus, salvari non poterit a Deo Patre quisquam nisi confessus fuerit Christum Deum, in quo, et per quem se repromittit Pater salutem daturum: ut merito, quisquis

Words too plain to need any comment. Only I may observe, that Novatian, as well as Cyprian, understood the word God, as applied to Christ, to import proper and substantial divinity; as I have abundantly proved elsewhere^k. Besides which, it is certain, that the Novatians, his followers, were always orthodox in the article of Christ's divinity, as also in the doctrine of the whole Trinity^l.

A. D. 259. *Dionysius of Rome.*

Dionysius, bishop of Rome, in a valuable fragment, preserved by Athanasius, stiles the doctrine of the Trinity, The most venerable doctrine of the church of God^m; understanding the doctrine as we do at this day. It was then looked upon as a speculative opinion, or as a matter of slight importance. But this is not all I have to observe from the same excellent writer. He goes on to speak of some who had the presumption to call the Son of God a creature, led to it by
their

quisquis illum agnoscit esse Deum, salutem inveniat in Deo Christo; quisquis non recognoscit esse Deum, salutem perdidit, quoniam alibi nisi in Christo Deo eam invenire non poterit. Novat. C. 12. p. 36.

^k First Defence, p. 13, &c. p. 137, &c. Second Defence, p. 61, &c. 129, &c. 150, 502, 507. 2^d Edit. Conf. Bull. D. F. N. sect. ii. C. 10. p. 121, 122.

^l The testimonies may be seen collected in a late pamphlet, intitled, An Answer to Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston, &c. By H. E. in the preface, p. 2, 3.

^m Τὸ σεμνότετον κήρυγμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῷ Θεῷ. Apud. Athanas. Vol. i. p. 231.

their indiscreet opposition to sabellianism, as it was natural enough for weak men to run from one extreme to another. He rejects the notion with the utmost abhorrence, as every wise and good man would: and after censuring Marcion's tritheistic doctrine as diabolical, he proceeds to speak of the other, as follows: "Nor are they
 " less to blame, who think the Son a crea-
 " ture, and who suppose the Lord to have come
 " into being, as if he were one of the things
 " that were really made. The sacred oracles
 " assign him a generation, suitable and proper,
 " not a formation and creation. Wherefore
 " it must be blasphemy of no ordinary size,
 " but of the first magnitude, to say that the
 " Lord was a kind of handy work. For if he
 " began to be, he once was not. But he ex-
 " isted eternally, if so be that he is in the
 " Father, as himself testifies, and if Christ be
 " the word, and wisdom, and power". There
 is more to the same purpose in what follows. What I have cited may suffice to shew, that the doctrine of our Lord's coeternal divinity was then looked upon as an article of the highest importance, and that to deny it was to blas-
 pheme

ⁿ Οὐ μείον δ' ἂν τις καταμέμφοιτο καὶ τὸς ποίημα τὸν υἱὸν εἶναι δοξάζοντας, καὶ γεγονέναι τὸν κύριον, ὥσπερ ἐν τι ὄντως γενομένων, νομίζοντας, τῶν θείων λογίων γέννησιν αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρμόττεσθαι καὶ πρέπεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἔχῃ πλάσιν τινὰ καὶ ποίησιν πρεσμαεργεσιῶν. Βλάσφημον ἔν ἐ τὸ τυχόν, μέγιστον μὲν ἔν, χειροποίητον τρόπον τινὰ λέγειν τὸν κύριον· εἰ γὰρ γέγονεν υἱός, ἦν ὅτε ἔκ ἦν· αἰεὶ δὲ ἦν, εἴγε ἐν τῷ πατρὶ εἶσιν, ὡς αὐτός φησι, καὶ εἰ λόγος, καὶ σοφία, καὶ δύναμις χριστός. Apud. Athanas. Vol. i. p. 231, 232.

pheme in a most grievous manner, according to the sentiments of the church at that time. For Dionysius speaks not his own sense only, but the sense of the Roman synod, and of good christians in general; as he himself intimates by his saying to those whom he addresses himself to, that he had no need to dwell upon that matter before persons so enlightened by the spirit of God, and so well apprized, as they were, of the great absurdity of making the Son a creature°.

A. D. 259. *Dionysius of Alexandria.*

The case of Dionysius of Alexandria is a famous case. He had written some things against the sabellians, wherein expressing himself unwarily, he was suspected by some to lean too far towards the opposite extreme, as if he had not just notions of the divinity of Christ. A jealousy being raised, the matter was thought considerable enough to be brought before the other Dionysius bishop of Rome: which, probably, occasioned his writing what I have just now cited from him^p. The bishop of Rome took cognizance of the clause, and the bishop of Alexandria, though not inferior to him, nor under his jurisdiction, submitted so far as to put in his

° Καὶ τὸ ἂν ἐπὶ πλείον περὶ τέτων πρὸς ὑμᾶς διαλεγόμενῃ, πρὸς ἄνδρας πνευματοφόρους, καὶ σαφῶς ἐπισταμένους τὰς ἀτοπίας τὰς ἐκ τῆ ποιήμα λέγειν τὸν υἱὸν ἀνακυπτέσας. *ibid.* p. 232.

^p See Athanas. de Sententia Dionysii Alex. p. 252. de Synod.

his answer, or apology: which alone shews, that it was looked upon by all parties, as a cause of great moment: for in smaller matters, bishops were not obliged to give account to their colleagues. St. Cyprian well expresses both the cases, viz. where and when independent bishops were accountable to other bishops^q, and where they were not^r. The sum is, that in the ritual part of religion, such bishops were independent, and unaccountable; but in the substantial part, in matters of necessary faith, they were liable to be censured by their brethren. Seeing therefore that Dionysius of Alexandria was accused in a cause of heresy, the bishop of Rome could not decline hearing it, nor the other refuse to submit to have it heard, and judged. The whole process of that affair shews that the divinity of Christ (about which the question was) was looked upon by all

^q Copiosum corpus est sacerdotum, concordiae mutuae glutino atque unitatis vinculo copulatum, ut si quis ex collegio nostro hæresin facere, et gregem Christi lacerare et vastare tentaverit, subveniant cæteri, et quasi pastores utiles et misericordes, oves dominicas in gregem colligant. Cyprian. ad Steph. Ep. 68. p. 178. Conf. Frid. Spanheim. F. Tom. I. p. 740.

^r Superest ut de hac ipsâ re, singuli quid sentiamus, proferamus; neminem judicantes, aut a jure communionis aliquem, si diversum senserit, amoventes. Neque enim quisquam nostrum episcopum se episcoporum constituit, aut tyrannico terrore ad obsequendi necessitatem collegas suos adigit; quando habeat omnis episcopus pro licentiâ libertatis et potestatis suæ arbitrium proprium; tamque judicari ab alio non potest, quam nec ipse potest judicare. Sed expectemus universi judicium Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui unus et solus habet potestatem et præponendi nos in ecclesiæ suæ gubernatione, et de actu nostro judicandi. Concil. Carthagin. apud Cypr. p. 229, 230.

all parties as a cause of the utmost concernment to religion. The whole christian world, in a manner, was in an alarm about it. Complaint was brought from Egypt as far as to Italy. The bishop of Rome, with his clergy in synod, were in the greatest concern upon it, and sent their judgment of the matter in question to the bishop of Alexandria, requiring him to give an account of his faith. And that aged venerable primate did so soon after, declaring in the face of the world, that he never intended the least injury to the divinity of Christ, or to his consubstantiality, but himself believed it, as sincerely, and fully, as any man else could. This affair is recorded by Athanasius^s, from whom I have collected what I have said. And it is a standing monument of the high regard paid to the doctrine of our Lord's divinity^t, as a most important and fundamental article of christianity, in those days, 60 years and more before the council of Nice.

A. D. 319. *Alexander of Alexandria.*

I shall close this account with the sentiments of Alexander and his clergy, among which were near a hundred more bishops of the province,

^s Athanas. de Sententia Dionys. p. 252. de Synod. 757, 758.

^t See the whole thing more particularly drawn out, and vindicated from exceptions, in Bull. Def. F. N. sect. ii. C. 11. Thirlby's answers to Whiston's suspicions, p. 31, &c. Berriman, Hist. Account, p. 127, &c.

province, upon the present question, at the first breaking out of the arian heresy. In the synodical letter, after sentence of excommunication passed upon Arius and his adherents, they represent the arians, or eusebians, as fallen into an apostasy, and as forerunners of antichrist^a. They compare them with Hymenæus and Philetus, and the traitor Judas; and they stigmatize them as enemies to God, and subverters of souls. Such was their sense of the high importance of the doctrine of Christ's divinity, which Arius had impugned. About two years after, the same Alexander, in his circular letter to the other Alexander of Byzantium, after declaring his faith in Christ, as truly and essentially God, of that and other creeds, he says: "These we teach, " and these we declare. These are the apostolical doctrines of the church, for which " we should be content to die, making small " account of them who would compel us to " deny them. For though they should even " torture us to comply, yet would we not cast " off our hope in those [doctrines]: for the opposing of which Arius and Achillas, with their " accomplices, being enemies to the truth, are " ejected out of the church, as deserters of our " holy faith [godly doctrine,] pursuant to St. " Paul's rule; If any one *preach any other gospel* " *unto you* than what you have received, *let him* " *be*

^a " Ἄνδρες παράνομοι καὶ χρεισομάχοι, διδάσκοντες ἀποστασίαν ἢ εἰκότως ἂν τις πρὸ δόξου τε Ἀντιχρίστου ὑπονοήτειε καὶ καλέσειεν, Ap. Athanas. p. 397. et ap. Socrat. L. i. C. 6.

“ *be accursed*, though he should pretend to be an “ *angel from heaven^b*.” Such were the sentiments of this good and great man, relating to the importance of the doctrine he taught; the same which was afterward confirmed by the general council of Nice, summoned from out of all Christendom to decide so momentous a question.

The sum of what I have advanced in this chapter, is, that by three several topics it is proved to be certain fact, that the doctrine of our Lord’s divinity, and so of the whole Trinity, was looked upon by the ancient churches of Christ, as one of the prime verities, one of the essentials of christianity. This, I say, is proved from creeds, and from censures upon heresies, (public acts of the church) and from particular testimonies of fathers, declaring their own private sentiments of the weight and importance of the doctrines we have been considering. Now, I proceed to enquire of what use and value this view of the ancients may be to us.

^b Ταῦτα διδάσχομεν, ταῦτα κηρύττομεν· ταῦτα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὰ ἀποστολικά δόγματα, ὑπὲρ ὧν καὶ ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῶν ἐξόμνυσθαι αὐτὰ βιαζομένων ἦττον πεφροντικότες, εἰ καὶ διὰ βασάνων ἀναγκάζουσι, τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐλπίδα μὴ ἀποσρεφόμενοι· ὧν ἐναντίαι, κ. τ. λ. Apud Theodorit. E. H. L. i. C. 4.

C H A P. VII.

*Shewing the use and value of ecclesiastical antiquity
with respect to controversies of faith.*

I INTEND not here to consider the use of the fathers in the largest extent, but only so far as concerns articles of faith. I shall endeavour to set this matter in as clear a light as I can, for the impartial and discerning reader to judge of, avoiding all extremes. A certain writer, whom I should not perhaps have taken the least notice of, had it not thus fallen in my way, has been pleased to tell the world; that “ Dr. “ Waterland and some others, who have appeared “ on the same side of the question, have only “ considered the scripture in that light which “ a sober Turk or an Indian might discover in “ it. But scripture has a much greater force “ in the hands of St. Athanasius, and of St. “ Basil, (who viewed it in its true, that is, in “ its original and traditionary sense, and under “ the lights of faith) than it has in Dr. Water- “ land’s; who ascends no higher than the bare “ letter, and that sense, of which all men, who “ are sincere, may equally judge, whether they “ believe it or not. But when St. Athanasius “ and St. Basil argue from scripture, they have “ a regard to faith, and those ideas which catho-
“ lies

“ lies have already had concerning the Son and “ the Holy Spirit^c.” The report which this gentleman has here made, may be true in part : and so far what he intended as an article of blame, may appear much otherwise to more equal judges. I doubt not to say, that the scripture is plain enough in this cause, for any honest turk or indian to judge of, who is but able to discern the difference between wresting a text, and giving it an easy and natural interpretation. Nor do I see, why a man may not be as certain of the construction of scripture, in this article, from the words themselves, comparing scriptures with scriptures, as he may be of the sense of Homer or Aristotle, of Cicero or Cæsar, in plain and clear passages. Nevertheless, if over and above this, any further light or strength may arise from comparing scripture and antiquity together, it is an additional advantage to our cause, such as we are thankful for, and constantly make use of. All kinds of evidences are useful; and there is so much weakness generally in mankind, that we have no reason to throw aside any assistances given us for relief or remedy. Antiquity therefore, superadded to scripture, is what we sincerely value, and pay a great regard to; perhaps much greater than that gentleman himself really does. For, if I be not very

^c An answer to Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston, concerning the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, with a summary account of the chief writers of the first ages. By H. E. printed by Roberts, 1729. See Pref. p. 4, 5.

very much mistaken in the drift and tendency of his censure, it is such as plainly discovers (notwithstanding his artful disguises) a much more affectionate concern for a modern corrupt church, than for the pure and ancient faith. St. Athanasius and St. Basil pleaded the same cause, and exactly in the same way, as we of the church of England do. They appealed to scripture first, speaking for itself, and proving its own sense to the common reasons of mankind according to the just rules of grammar and criticism. After that, they referred also to the well known faith of all the ancient churches, as superabundantly confirming the same rational and natural construction. Athanasius and Basil were wise and honest men, and would never have admitted what this writer meanly insinuates^d (while he pretends to be an advocate on the same side) that arianism would not be heresy upon the foot of scripture, singly considered. Such unworthy suggestions are as contrary to the general sense of antiquity, as they are to truth and godliness; and tend only to betray the best of causes, for the sake of serving and supporting one of the worst. Athanasius's sentiments may appear from one single passage, which is all I need refer to at length in proof of a thing so well known. He observes, that the arians, finding nothing in scripture to countenance their heresy, were forced to have recourse

^d Ibid. p. 6, 7.

course to confident presumptions and collusive sophistry; and when they had done with those, their next attempt was to abuse the fathers also^e, who favoured them as little as the scripture did. Athanasius appealed to scripture in the first place, and laid the main stress there: which indeed is his constant way in his dispute with the arians. No man speaks more highly of the perfection and sufficiency of scripture than he does: namely, that it affords the fullest and strongest evidences, for establishing the faith against the arians^f; and that is in itself sufficient for every thing^g. The like might be shewn of Basil, were it needful. Therefore let not that gentleman hope to find shelter for his insidious conduct, under those great and venerable names.

He proceeds to observe, that “ Catholics (Roman catholics I suppose he means) are so accustomed to join faith and reading the holy scripture together, that they account this to be the natural signification of the words^h.” Which is artfully insinuating, that the sense which trinitarians affix to scripture, is not natural, but made to appear so, through the prejudice

^e Τῶν δ' Ἀρειομανιτῶν τὴν ἀλογίαν καὶ νῦν ἐπέγνω· ἔθεν γὰρ ἔτ' εὐλογον, ὅτε πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν ἐκ τῆς θείας γραφῆς ἑστὸν ἐχέσης τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτῶν, αἰεὶ μὲν προφάσεις ἀναισχύντως ἐπορίζοντο, καὶ σοφίσματα πιθανὰ· νῦν δὲ καὶ διαβάλλειν τῆς πατέρας τετολμήκασιν. Athanas. de Sent. Dionys. p. 243.

^f Vid. Athanas. 274, 720, 237. Edit. Bened.

^g Athanas. p. 1.

^h Answer to Dr. Clarke, &c. p. 7.

judice of education, or through the lights of an infallible chair. And so he pleads, under cover, for imposing a sense upon scripture, instead of taking one from the natural force of the words. This never was the advice of the ancients^k, neither ought it to be the practice of moderns. We insist upon it, that our interpretation of scripture is just and natural, and that one great use of antiquity is, to guard that natural construction against unnatural distortions. To do violence to scripture, in order to bring it to speak what we have a mind to, or what we have pre-conceived, is making scripture insignificant, and setting up a new rule of faith. And indeed, this gentleman, afterwards, gives very broad intimations, that scripture is not the whole rule of faith^l. So, now the secret is out. And, I suppose, by this time, it is manifest what cause he is serving; and that he has something else more at heart than the doctrine of the Trinity. However, to do him justice, though he has made too many concessions, and has not sufficiently considered his subject^m, he has yet given us a neat methodical summary of the doctrine of the ancients upon

^k Optimus enim lector est, qui dictorum intelligentiam expectet ex dictis potius quam imponat, et retulerit magis quam attulerit; neque cogat id videri dictis contineri, quod ante lectionem præsumserit intelligendum. Hilar. de Trin. L. i. Col. 777.

^l Answer to Dr. Clarke, Pref. p. 17. Book 22, 23.

^m This appears from his lame and confused account of the word person, p. 5.—11, 38.

upon that head. Only, it would grieve a man to observe, how disadvantageous circumstances he chuses to place those venerable saints in, as overruling the natural sense of words, and making that heresy which scripture has not made so, having no authority for doing it, but what they must borrow from a particular churchⁿ, which gives the same to every article of the Trent creed. But leaving this gentleman to take his own way, let us now proceed to the business in hand.

There is no occasion for magnifying antiquity at the expence of scripture; neither is that the way to do real honour to either, but to expose both; as it is sacrificing their reputation to serve the ends of novelty and error. Antiquity ought to attend as an handmaid to scripture,

ⁿ The very pious Mr. Nelson, in a letter to a popish priest, has some reflections worth the inserting in this place.

“ I am not ignorant, that two of your great champions, Cardinal Perron and Petavius, to raise the authority of general councils, and to make the rule of their faith appear more plausible, have aspersed not only the holy scriptures, as incapable, by reason of their obscurity, to prove the great and necessary point of our Saviour’s divinity, but have impeached also the fathers of the first three centuries as tardy in the same point.—Blessed God! that men should be so fond of human inventions, as to sacrifice to them those pillars of our faith, which are alone proper and able to support it; I mean scripture, and primitive antiquity. But to do justice to the memory of so learned a man as Petavius, the bishop of Meaux told me, discoursing with him once on this subject, that in the last edition he made of his works, he retracted this opinion: which I am willing to believe upon the authority of that great man, &c.” Dr. Hickes’s Letters, &c. p. 334. Compare Chillingworth, Pref. sect. 16, 17, 18. Wall. Inf. Bapt. Part. ii. C. 8. f. 6.

scripture, to wait upon her as her mistress, and to observe her; to keep off intruders from making too bold with her, and to discourage strangers from misrepresenting her. Antiquity, in this ministerial view is of very great use; which I shall endeavour to shew as distinctly as may be.

But, first, let me premise a few things, in order to give the reader a clearer idea of the true state of the whole case. It is to be considered, that scripture consists of words, and that words are but signs, and that common usage and acceptance is what must settle their meaning. And when any thing comes down to us in a dead language, as scripture now does, the customary use of words in that language, at the time when they were spoken, or written, must be the rule and measure of interpretation^o; only, taking in with it, the drift and intention of the speaker, or writer, so far as it may be certainly known, or probably presumed from evidences, or circumstances.

It is next to be considered, that there is something of equivocalness and ambiguity, for the most part, in words or phrases, though ever so well and wisely chosen; and that many through ignorance, or inattention, or prepossession may mistake or pervert their true meaning. Subtle wits may at any time take advantage of this natural imperfection of all languages, and
may

^o See Rogers's Review, p. 41.—51.

may wrest the plainest expressions from their true and certain meaning, to a false and foreign one. The nature of language, I say, is such, that it may be done, and the depravity, or weakness of mankind, is such, that it often will be done. And then disputes will arise about the jarring and dissonant interpretations, all perhaps appearing severally possible, and all plausibly recommended, though amongst them all there is but one which is truly reasonable.

It may further be considered, that all languages abound with metaphors, tropes, figures, or schemes of speech; and it is allowable to interpret figuratively, allegorically, emblematically, as often as there is a necessity for it, or good reason to apprehend that the thing was written in the way of figure, allegory, or emblem. This allowable liberty may easily be extended too far, through want of judgment, or want of care, or of honesty and sincerity. Indeed, most of the abuses, with regard to interpreting of scripture, when traced up to their fountain head, will appear to have been owing to this, that some will fancy the plain and obvious sense unreasonable, or absurd, when it really is not; and will thereupon obtrude their own surmises, conjectures, prejudices upon the word of God. For, having taken their own conceits for certain truths, and having determined before hand, that the letter of scripture shall give way to them, they will of course rack and torture scripture, as far as wit, learning,
or

or invention can assist them, in order to contrive some construction or other, which may but seem to favour their preconceived opinions; unless they chuse rather to reject or adulterate the texts which make against them, or to devise new scriptures to serve the purpose.

Add to this, that the art of torturing plain words has been advanced to great perfection in these latter ages, since the revival of learning and sciences; and especially since the foci-nians* and romanists have taken almost incredible pains to make themselves complete masters in that way. There is nothing now almost, but what

¶ The fociinian management is thus elegantly described by Abr. Calovius.

Dici non potest quam nefario ausu, quam profanâ impietate, quam horrendo sacrilegio versentur illi scripturarum corruptores in sacris literis, ut suæ aut favere videantur, aut saltem non adversari sententiæ. Modo enim scripta θεόπνευστα, partim novi, partim et imprimis veteris Testamenti, de sublimi auctoritatis divinæ fastigio deturbant; modo sententias et periodos quasdam scripturæ sacræ in dubium revocant; modo distinctiones parenthesium et cola intervertunt, ac trajectionum novo ἐνζήματι Spiritûs S. sensum invertunt; modo per apostrophas, vel exclamations mentem scripturæ corrumpunt; modo per constructiones recens excogitatas, modo per vocum significationes inusitatas, nullisque lexicographis cognitatas; modo per ἀνάλυσιν violentam, modo per ἐξηγήσιν prorsus insolentem, interdum et κατὰ διάμετρον oppositam et contrariam, sacras literas detorquent: quadrata rotundis, supera inferis, cœlum terris miscent, horrendâque σε-ξλόγητι oracula sanctissima pervertunt, detestandâ μεταμορφώσει transformant. Quicquid denique apertum et clarum in sacris literis, id veluti sepia rationis suæ obscurant atramento. Ipsam autem scripturam perplexitatis, ἀνισορροσίας, ἀπαιδευσίας, ἀνακωλυθείας, ambiguitatis, obscuritatis, incertitudinis, erroris, falsitatis, impie postulant et accusant; scilicet juxta illud Hieronymi veriverbium, “ Hæretici convicti de perfidiâ, conferunt se ad “ maledicta.” Vid. Wucherer. Vindic. adv. Whiston. p. 21. A. D. 1732.

what some or other will attempt (if there be occasion) to drag over into the service of any cause, and to wrest to what sense they please, though ever so contrary to the words themselves, or to the known intention of the authors or compilers. The ancient misbelievers most of them were young practitioners in comparison. For they commonly rejected or adulterated the scriptures which they did not like^a, not understanding, or however not trusting to qualifying interpretations, which might steal away the sense, without injuring the letter.

Lastly, It should be considered, that God has provided no other general remedies against these and the like abuses, or against our being imposed upon by them, than what he has provided against any other wiles of satan, or any other temptation; namely, prayer and watchfulness, care and endeavour, and the use of proper means. We are no more secure against heresy, than we are against any other sins. But there are as strong temptations to it (founded in natural pride, vanity, curiosity, emulation, envy, ambition, or sometimes credulity, supineness, secular interest, or revenge) as there are other vices of a coarser kind.

These things considered, it will be highly expedient to take in all the helps we can procure, for the ascertaining the true and full meaning

^a The heretics, so charged, are Cerinthus, Ebion, Saturninus, Carpocrates, Cerdon, Marcion, Lucian, Apelles, Tatian, Ptolemæus, Theodotus, Artemon, Manichæus; the ophitæ, cainites, sethoites, alogi, pepuzians, severians, and perhaps some others.

meaning of sacred writ, and for preserving, so far as in us lies, the doctrines of Christ. No proper means are to be neglected; or set aside, lest we fall into error for want of the use of such means, or be found guilty of despising the gifts of God. Now we may come to the main question, whether antiquity may not be justly reputed one of the proper means, or how far it is so? In which enquiry, I shall proceed by several steps or degrees, for the clearer and more distinct conception of what belongs to it, under its several views.

I. The ancients who lived nearest to the apostolical times, are of some use to us, considered merely as contemporary writers, for their diction, or phraseology. Any other coetaneous writers, jewish or pagan, are of use in that view. But home writers, christian authors, will be so more especially, as conversant in the same subjects, and breathing the same spirit with the sacred writers themselves^r. This, however, is the least, and the lowest use of the ancient fathers; besides that we have but few, and those very short tracts, which bear so early a date.

II. A farther use of the ancient fathers is seen, in their letting us into the knowledge of antiquated rites and customs, upon which some scripture allusions may be formed, and upon the knowledge of which, the true interpretation of some scripture phrases or idioms may

^r Vid. Dodwell. Dissert. in Iren. in Præfat. f. 15. et Dissert 1.

may in some measure depend^s. But this general use is such as may also be answered, in a lower degree, by any as early writings, jewisb or pagan; as likewise by lexicons, or books of antiquities.

III. The ancient fathers are further useful, as giving us insight into the history of the age in which the sacred books (of the New Testament, I mean) were written. For there is nothing which is apt to give so much light to any writing, as the well understanding and considering the historical occasion of it: a much surer and safer rule to go by, generally speaking, than mere citing upon words; as is manifest in the case of charters, statutes, records, and other ancient monuments.

IV. I come, fourthly, to mention some more peculiar and eminent views, in which the ancientest fathers may be exceeding useful, for fixing the sense of scripture in controverted texts. Those that lived in or near the apostolical times, might retain in memory what the apostles themselves, or their immediate successors thought and said upon such and such points. And though there is no trusting, in such case, to oral tradition, distinct from scripture, nor to written, disagreeing with scripture; yet written accounts, consonant to scripture, are of use to confirm and strengthen scripture, and to ascertain its true meaning. Ignatius, for instance, had been intimately conversant

^s Dodwell, Dissert. in Iren. i. C. 44.

versant with the apostles^t, and was a disciple of St. John^u: and therefore he may reasonably be presumed to have justly represented the mind of the apostles in the doctrine he has left behind him, extant at this day. This the learned Mosheim has admitted, and even contended for^x, though otherwise no zealous admirer of the ancient fathers.

The like may be said of Polycarp, who had been taught immediately by the apostles, and had conversed with many who had seen our Lord^y. He was also particularly acquainted with St. John^z, was one of his disciples, and ordained bishop of Smyrna by his hands^a. His doctrine, so far as it reaches, and may be certainly depended upon as his, (whether we have it at first, or at second hand) will be of great use for confirming the sense of scripture, being a secondary attestation of the same doctrine: which Mosheim, before mentioned, does also allow, and plead for^b. Our most

^t Chrysostom. Hom. in Ignat. Tom. i. p. 499. Socrat. Eccl. H. L. vi. C. 8.

^u Act. Ignat. p. 9. edit. Grab. in Spicileg.

^x Si doctrinam quam hic publice proposuit, intelligimus, id simul quod Petrus, Joannes, cæterique servatoris amici senserint, et Antiochenis tradiderint, exploratum habemus. Mosheim Vindic. contr. Toland. f. i. C. 8. Compare Abp. Wake, C. 10. p. 111. 114. 2d. edit.

^y Iren. L. iii. C. 3. Euseb. E. H. L. iv. C. 14.

^z Iren. Ep. ad Florin. int. Fragment. p. 340. Euseb. E. H. v. 20.

^a Hieronym. Catal. Scriptor. Eccl. xvii.

Tertullian. Præscript. C. xxxii.

^b Indubitata itaque fidei testem rursus habemus, non modo doctrinæ quam ipse cætui suo tradidit, sed et ejus quam optimus magister discedens suis reliquit. Mosheim ibid. p. 237.

Abp. Wake's apostolical fathers, C. x. p. 111.

most reverend metropolitan, speaking of the authority of the very early fathers, sums it up in these several particulars. “ 1. That they were
 “ contemporary with the apostles, and instructed
 “ by them. 2. That they were men of an
 “ eminent character in the church, and therefore
 “ such as could not be ignorant of what was
 “ taught in it. 3. They were careful to preserve
 “ the doctrine of Christ in its purity, and to
 “ oppose such as went about to corrupt it.
 “ 4. They were men not only of a perfect piety,
 “ but of great courage and constancy, and there-
 “ fore such as cannot be suspected to have had
 “ any design to prevaricate in this matter. 5. They
 “ were endued with a large portion of the Holy
 “ Spirit, and, as such, could hardly err in what
 “ they delivered as the gospel of Christ. 6. Their
 “ writings were approved by the church in those
 “ days, which could not be mistaken in its ap-
 “ probation of them.”

Mr. Bayle allows, that, “ in the days of
 “ the apostles, or their first disciples, it had
 “ been easy to discover those who gave the
 “ scriptures a wrong interpretation, because
 “ the infallibility of the apostles, (who might
 “ have been consulted by word, or by let-
 “ ter) and the fresh remembrance of the verbal
 “ instructions they had given their disciples,
 “ and pastors whom themselves had conse-
 “ crated, was a ready means for clearing any
 “ doubt

^c Abp. Wake's apostolical fathers, C. x. p. 110.

“doubt, or disputed point^a.” It appears then to be on all hands agreed, that those most early fathers are competent witnesses of the doctrine of the church in their days; nay, and of the doctrine also of Christ, and his apostles, to whom they immediately succeeded: and therefore their general sense is of signal use (so far as it reaches) to ascertain the interpretation of scripture, and more especially as being consonant to the easy and natural import of the words themselves.

The like may be said in proportion, and in a lower degree, of the writings of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus^b; eminent personages, who flourished within 50, or 60, or at most 90 years of the apostolical age. Their nearness to the time, their known fidelity, and their admirable endowments, ordinary and extraordinary, add great weight to their testimony, or doctrine, and make it a probable rule of interpretation in the prime things. But there is another consideration to follow in its place, which will give it still greater strength of probability, than what I have here suggested. As to later fathers, the argument,

in

^a Bayle's Supplement to Philosophical Commentary, p. 692.

^b Clemens of Alexandria, the latest of the four, yet testifies of himself, that he had received his doctrine from several disciples of the very chief apostles, who had truly preserved the tradition of the blessed doctrine, as coming directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, and Paul. Strom. L. i. p. 322. Conf. Grabe. Instances of Omissions, and Defects, &c. P. 9.

in this view, loses its force more and more, the lower we descend. Yet it deserves our notice, that the fathers of the third and fourth centuries had the advantage of many written accounts of the doctrine of the former ages, which have since been lost; and therefore their testimonies also are of considerable weight, and are a mark of direction to us, not to be slighted in the main things. Neither indeed is this saying any thing very highly of them, but may be thought rather, to be setting them too low, and sinking them beneath their real value. For the testimonies of jews, heretics, or pagans, so far as we can depend upon them, must be allowed to carry in them the same use, where they testify any thing of the general doctrine, or practice of the christian church, in their times. Pliny, Lucian, Celsus, and Julian (to name no more) are all useful to us in this view, as they give some light into the doctrine of the first and purest ages. They confirm the fact, that such doctrines were then generally taught, and they corroborate other evidences. Socinus seems to have allowed more to one testimony of Lucian, than to many christian evidences^c. No doubt, but it was some advantage to it in his esteem,

^c Nec vero nobis quidquam hactenus legere contigit, quod trini istius Dei, a christianis jam tum recepti et culti, fidem facere videatur magis, quam quæ ex dialogo, qui Philopatris inscribitur, et inter Luciani opera numeratur, ad id probandum affert Genebrardus, L. 1. et 2. de Trinitate. Socin. adv. Eutrop. C. xv. p. 698. op.

esteem, that it came from a pagan: though still it had not weight enough to conquer his prejudices. For he never wanted evasions. But I pass on to what I intend farther. All kinds of evidences are of use, which can bring us any light, as to what the doctrine of the church was in the best and purest ages. And when we are once advanced so far as to come to any certainty about that fact, then we have ground whereon to stand, and can build our argument upon it.

V. The next consideration therefore is this, that a very particular regard is due to the public acts of the ancient church, appearing in creeds made use of in baptism, and in the censures passed upon heretics. And the observable harmony and unanimity of the several churches^d, in such acts, is a circumstance which adds irresistible force to them. It is not at all likely, that any whole church of those early times should vary from apostolical doctrine in things of moment. But it is, morally speaking, absurd to imagine, that

^d Traditionem itaque apostolorum in toto mundo manifestatam in omni ecclesiâ adest respicere omnibus qui vera volunt videre. Et habemus annumerare eos, qui ab apostolis instituti sunt episcopi in ecclesiis, et successores eorum usque ad nos, qui nihil tale docuerunt, neque cognoverunt quale ab his deliratur. Iren. L. iii. C. 3.

Itaque tot ac tantæ ecclesiæ una illa ab apostolis prima ex quâ omnes. Sic omnes primæ, et apostolicæ, dum una omnes probant unitatem; dum est illis communicatio pacis, et appellatio fraternitatis, et confesseratio hospitalitatis: quæ jura non alia ratio regit, quam ejusdem sacramenti una traditio. Tertul. Præscript. C. 20.

that all the churches should combine in the same error, and conspire together to corrupt the doctrine of Christ^e. This is the argument which Irenæus and Tertullian insist much upon, and triumph in, over the heretics of their times, and it is obliquely glanced upon by Hegesippus and Clemens Alexandrinus of the same second century, and by Origen also of the third. The argument was undoubtedly true and just, as it then stood, while there were no breaks in the succession of doctrine, but a perfect unanimity of the churches all along, in the prime articles: though, afterwards, the force of this argument came to be obscured, and almost lost, by taking in things foreign to it, and blending it with what happened in later times. The force of it could last no longer than such unanimity lasted. I say, while the churches were all unanimous in the main things (as they were in Irenæus's time, and Tertullian's, and for more than a century after) that very unanimity was a presumptive argument, that their faith was right, derived down to them from the apostles themselves. For it was highly unreasonable to suppose, that those several churches, very distant from each other in place, and of different languages, and under no common visi-
ble

^e *Ecquid verisimile est, ut tot ac tantæ in unam fidem erraverint? nullus inter multos eventus unus est. Exitus variasse debuerat error doctrinæ ecclesiarum. Ceterum, quod apud multos unum invenitur, non est erratum, sed traditum. Tertul. ibid. C. 28.*

ble head, should all unite in the same errors, and deviate uniformly from their rule at once. But that they should all agree in the same common faith, might easily be accounted for, as arising from the same common cause, which could be no other but the common delivery of the same uniform faith and doctrine to all the churches by the apostles themselves^f. Such unanimity could never come by chance, but must be derived from one common source: and therefore the harmony of their doctrine was in itself a pregnant argument of the truth of it^g. As to the fact, that the churches were thus unanimous in all the prime things, in those days, Irenæus, who was a very knowing person, and who had come far east to settle in the west, bears ample testimony to it^h. Tertullian, in the two passages last cited from him, testifies the same thing, as to the unanimity of the churches of those times in the fundamentals of christian doctrine. Hegesippus, contemporary with Irenæus, gives much the same account of the succession of true doctrine, down to his own time, in the several churches.

^f See this argument very well explained and enforced by Dr. Sherlock, in his present State of the Socinian controversy, C. 2. f. 2. p. 60, &c. Chillingworth, C. 2. f. 147. p. 98.

^g Vero simile fit complures ecclesias originis apostolicæ, regionibus linguæque diffitas, eam doctrinæ concordiam ab uno fonte hausisse, utpote quæ a casu non introducta videtur. Sam. Basnag. Annal. Tom. i. 742.

^h Iren. L. i. C. 10. alias 3. L. iii. C. 3, 4.

churchesⁱ. Clemens of Alexandria means the same thing, where he recommends the faith of the universal church as one, and as more ancient than heresies^k. And Origen of the third century testifies the same of the church in his time, and argues in the same manner from it^l. Irenæus and Tertullian were both of them so strongly persuaded of the certainty, first, of the fact, and next of the inference from it, that they scrupled not to urge it as a very full and convincing proof of the apostolical faith, singly considered^m, and abstracted from scripture proof. An argument which there is no need to be jealous of, if it be but rightly understood, and

ⁱ Ἐν ἐκάσῃ δὲ διζδοχῇ, καὶ ἐν ἐκάσῃ πόλει, ἔτως ἔχει, ὡς ὁ νόμος κηρύττει, καὶ οἱ προφῆται, καὶ ὁ κύριος. Hegeΰpp. ap. Euseb. L. iv. C. 22.

^k Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. 898, 899. Conf. Strom. i. p. 322.

^l Cum multi sint, qui se putant scire quæ Christi sunt, et nonnulli eorum diversa prioribus sentiant, servetur vero ecclesiastica prædicatio per successionis ordinem ab apostolis tradita, et usque ad præsens in ecclesiis permanens: illa sola credenda est veritas, quæ in nullo ab ecclesiasticâ traditione discordat. Origen. in Apolog. Pamph. inter op. Hieron. Tom. V. p. 223.

^m Tantæ igitur ostensiones cum sint, non oportet adhuc quærere apud alios veritatem, quam facile est ab ecclesiâ sumere, &c. — Quid enim, etsi de aliquâ modicâ quæstione disceptatio esset, nonne oporteret in antiquissimas recurrere ecclesias, in quibus apostoli conversati sunt, et ab eis de præsentî quæstione sumere quod certum et re liquidum est? Quid autem si neque apostoli quidem scripturas reliquissent nobis, nonne oportebat ordinem sequi traditionis, quam tradiderunt iis quibus committebant ecclesias? Cui ordinationi assentiunt multæ gentes barbarorum eorum qui in christum credunt, sine chartâ et atramento scriptam habentes per spiritum in cordibus suis salutem, et veterem traditionem diligenter custodientes, &c. Iren. L. iii. C. 4.

and limited to such circumstances as it was grounded upon. For the meaning was not, that apostolical churches could never err, nor that tradition would be always a safe rule to go by: but such tradition as that was, which might easily be traced up to the apostles, by the help of writings then extant, (as easily as we may now trace up the doctrine of our church to the reign of Charles, or of James the first) such a tradition might be depended upon. Besides that the unanimity of the churches all the world over (which could not be rationally accounted for on any other supposition but that they had been so taught from the beginning) confirmed the same thing. The argument in this light, and in those circumstances, was a very good one. But when those circumstances came to be altered, and there had been several breaks in the succession of doctrine, and that too even in the apostolical churches, then there could be no arguing in the same precise way, as before. Only thus far they might argue, in after times (upon a supposition that their faith could be proved to be the same as in the former ages) that since their doctrine was still that very doctrine which the churches held while they were unanimous and had admitted no breaks, therefore it is such as was from the beginning in the church of Christ. In this manner we can reason even at this day, and can thereby make Irenæus's or Tertullian's

argument our ownⁿ; provided we have first proved that the faith we contend for, is the very same that obtained in the churches of that age.

But before I leave this head, I would observe something more particularly of Tertullian's manner of expressing himself in this case. He did not only conceive that an argument might be drawn from tradition alone, abstracting from scripture, but he preferred that way of arguing, in disputes with heretics, as a shorter, easier, nay and surer method of confuting them, than engaging with them upon the foot of scripture^o.

This

ⁿ Ad hanc itaque formam probabuntur ab illis ecclesiis, quæ licet nullum ex apostolis, vel apostolicis, auctorem suum professant, ut multo posteriores, quæ denique quotidie instituuntur, tamen in eâdem fide conspirantes, non minus apostolicæ deputantur pro consanguinitate doctrinæ. Tertul. Præscript. C. 32.

^o Quid promovebis, exercitatissime scripturarum, cum si quid defenderis, negatur; ex diverso, si quid negaveris, defendatur. Et ut quidem nihil perdes, nisi vocem in contentione; nihil consequeris, nisi bilem de blasphématione. Ille vero, si quis est, cujus causâ in congressum descendis scripturarum, ut eum dubitantem confirmes, ad veritatem, an magis ad hæreses deverget? Hoc ipso motus, quod te videat nihil promovisse, æquo gradu negandi, et defendendi adversâ parte, statu certe dari, altercatione incertior discedet, nesciens quam hæresin judicet. Hæc utique et ipsi habent in nos retorquere. Necessè est enim et illos dicere, a nobis potius adulteria scripturarum, et expositionum mendacia inferri, qui proinde sibi defendant veritatem. Ergo non ad scripturas provocandum, nec in his constituendum certamen, in quibus aut nulla, aut incerta victoria est, aut par incertæ.—Ordo rerum desiderabat illud prius proponi, quod nunc forma disputandum est, quibus competat fides ipsa, cujus sunt scripturæ quo, et per quos, et quando, et quibus sit tradita disciplina quæ sunt christiani. Ubi enim apparuerit esse veritatem et disciplinam et fidei christianæ, illic erit veritas scripturarum, et expositionum, et omnium traditionum christianarum. Tertull. Præscript. C. 17, 18.

This may appear, to us now, an odd way of talking. But if it be taken as he meant it, and with a view only to the then present circumstances, I believe, it will be found to turn out right. He could not mean that the tradition of the sense of scripture, was more certain than the tradition of the words, or books of scripture: neither could he design to intimate that scripture texts did not themselves afford as certain, or more certain proofs of a doctrine than tradition could do, among persons qualified to judge in a critical way: neither could he imagine, that scripture should not be made use of, or should not be looked upon as the principal thing, in written debates against heretics; for no man makes more, or better use of scripture in that way than himself does. All he seems to have meant was, that in verbal conferences with heretics, in the presence of weak and infirm christians, the wisest way would be, not to engage the adversaries on the foot of scripture, (to bring on a debate about the canon of scripture, and the strict meaning of words or phrases, and so to to discuss the whole in a logical and critical way, tiresome to ordinary christians, and commonly fruitless^p) but to put the

^p Scripturas obtendunt, et hæc suâ audaciâ statim quosdam movent: in ipso vero congressu firmos quidem fatigant, infirmos capiunt, medios cum scrupulo dimittunt. Hunc igitur potissimum gradum obstruimus, non admittendos eos ad ullam de scripturis disputationem. Si hæc sint illæ vires eorum, uti eas habere possint, dispici debet, cui competat possessio scripturarum, ne is admittatur ad eam, cui nullo modo competit. Ibid. C. 15. Conf. C. 37.

the issue of the cause upon a few plain and short questions, such as common christians could better judge of. It was easy to discern, what party of men had been successors to the apostles, and had in constant succession made up the body of the church, preserving the same faith with great unanimity. This argument from tradition, was an argument drawn from sensible fact, and was much more affecting, obvious, and popular, than dry altercations about the authenticity of the books of scripture, or the precise meaning of words; and it was certain enough, at that time, to be depended upon: and therefore Tertullian recommended that method of debate, in such verbal conferences, rather than any other. Wherein to me he seems to have judged very well upon the prudential case, and like a wise and a sagacious man^a. Nevertheless, as often as he employed his pen in controversy with heretics, and drew up polemical tracts, though he would not omit to mention the additional advantage he had^r in point of prescription, or tradition, yet he chose to pass it off in short hints, and not to dwell upon it, but rather to rest the issue of the main cause upon scripture, and reason.

A learned foreign divine has indeed blamed Tertullian for his conduct in this affair, as
derogating

^a See Stillingfleet. Answer to several treatises. Works, Vol. v. p. 79, 80. Dodwell. Dissertat. in Iren. iii. f. 30. p. 282, 283. Taylor. Lib. of Proph. p. 124.

^r Vid. Tertullian, contr. Marc. L. i. C. 1, 20. L. iii. C. 1 contr. Prax. C. 2.

derogating from the authority of scripture, by laying such stress upon tradition: which appears not to be a just censure; but that learned writer runs into the other extreme, while he avers, that it is by scripture only, that the verity, or antiquity of a doctrine may be proved^s. There are two ways of proving the antiquity, and consequently the verity of a doctrine; namely, scripture and church history: and these two differ only in the manner of proof, or in the degree of moral certainty. Can we prove, for instance, what were the tenets of the ancient heretics, by the help of church history and records; and cannot we as well prove what were the tenets of ancient christians in the same way? It is true, we might more certainly prove what those heretics held, from their own books, if we had them; and so we may more certainly prove what was the faith of the first christians, from scripture, rather than from church records. But still the same thing is proved both ways, and by two kinds of evidences differing only, as I said, in degree of probability, or moral certainty. And therefore the learned Mosheim, as I before took notice^t, scruples not to assert in broad terms, that the antiquity of the christian faith is proved from
the

^s Huc illa referenda sunt effata, quibus scripturæ sacræ derogare auctoritati videtur, cum tamen ea sola sit, ex qua et veritas et antiquitas dogmatis cujusdam probari queat. Buddei Isagog. Vol. i. p. 997.

^t See above, p. 367.

the writings of Ignatius, and Polycarp^u: and he allows the same thing with respect to Clements Romanus, and Hegeſippus^v, and Caius^w, and Irenæus^x, and, by parity of reaſon, to all other church writers whoſe accounts may be depended upon^y. The admitting ſuch a ſecondary proof, in this caſe, is not derogating from ſcripture authority, but is confirming and ſtrengthening it in more views than one: as it is accepting the ſame kind of proof here, which we accept, in another caſe, with reſpect to the canon of ſcripture; and as it is corroborating the ſcripture account of the chriſtian faith, with collateral evidences, both to illuſtrate and inforce it. Not that one would, at this time of day, preſume to reſt an article of faith upon church records alone, or upon any thing beſides ſcripture. But while the ſuperior proof from ſacred writ is the ground of our faith^z, the ſubordinate

^u Moſheim. Vindic. adv. Toland. C. 8. p. 221, 222, 223.

^v Ibid. p. 218. ^w Ibid. p. 224. ^x Ibid. 238.

^y It is obſervable of Polycarp, in particular, that he convinced and converted great numbers to the true faith, by the ſtrength of tradition, being a ſenſible argument, and more affecting at that time, than any diſpute from the bare letter of ſcripture could be. [See Irenæus, Lib. iii. C. 3 p. 177.] It was under Anicetus, about the year 145. See Pearson, op. poſth. C. 14, &c. Dodwell, C. 13.

^z Scripture is the ground of our faith, conſidered as the inſallible word of God. But then that it is really the word of God, and that ſuch is the ſenſe of this or that text, ordinarily ſtands only upon moral proof; ſo that our faith at length reſolves into moral evidence, as it is a known rule, that the concluſion follows the weaker of the premiſes, and can be no ſtronger than that

subordinate proof from antiquity may be a good mark of direction for the interpretation of scripture in the prime doctrines^a. If we can prove from ancient records what that faith was which obtained so universally in the second century, and later, we can then argue from it in like manner as Irenæus, Hegesippus, Tertullian, yea and Clemens also and Origen did, and can make the like use of it against those that pervert scripture. Only, indeed, there will be this difference, that the argument, as now urged, is become one of the learned kind, and therefore not so well adapted to common capacities as it formerly was. And it is somewhat weaker to us, in another respect, as we have not so many evidences now extant, as those writers then had, whereby to prove such constant succession of doctrine so long, and such unanimity of the churches in professing it. But notwithstanding, we have evidences sufficient to persuade
rational

that is. But then again, it is to be considered, that the strength of moral evidence, in the general, resolves at last into divine veracity and faithfulness; since God has so made us, as to lay us under an inevitable necessity of submitting commonly to such evidence, and he cannot be supposed (without manifest absurdity and blasphemy) to have thus exposed the wisest, and most pious, and most considerate men to fatal and endless delusions. So then, in the last result, faith again resolves into, or rests upon the truth and goodness of God.

^a Quoties de scripti sensu quæritur, magnam vim habere solet, tum usus sequens, tum prudentum auctoritas; quod etiam in divinis scriptis sequendum est. Neque enim probabile est, ecclesias quæ ab apostolis constitutæ sunt, aut subito, aut omnes defecisse ab iis, quæ apostoli breviter præscripta, ore liberalius explicaverant. Grotius de Jur. B. et P. L. i. C. 2. f. 9. p. 60.

rational men; and the argument is still a good one^b, though with some abatements.

VI. There is one consideration more, tending still to strengthen the former, and which must by no means be omitted: namely, that the charismata, the extraordinary gifts were then frequent, visibly rested in and upon the church, and there only. I have occasionally hinted something of this matter before^c, so far as concerned Irenæus, and shall now throw in some additional evidences to make good the same thing. Justin Martyr is a witness of the frequency of the miraculous operations in his time: and he makes use of it, in dispute with Trypho^d, as an unanswerable argument in behalf of christianity against the jews; which S. Paul himself had done before him^e. Irenæus, as observed above, made the like use of it against heretics: and so does Tertullian, though in remote hints, and somewhat more obscurely^f. Those extraordinary gifts continued in a good measure, though decreasing gradually, for the three first centuries at least^g. So then, besides oral tradition for

^b “ This is an unanswerable argument, as long as we can
“ suppose the tradition of the catholic faith, and the commu-
“ nion of the church was preserved entire: which it visibly
“ was, at least till the first Nicene council. And had we no
“ other ways to know it, we might learn the faith of the catho-
“ lic church, by its opposition to those heresies which it con-
“ demned.” Sherlock’s present state of Socin. contro. p. 54.

^c See above, p. 299.

^d Justin Martyr. Dial. p. 308, 315. ed Par. alias 315, 329.

^e Gal. iii. 2.

^f Tertullian Præscript. C. 28, 29.

^g Vid. Spencer in Notis ad Origen. contra Cels. p. 5, &c.

Dodwell,

for the faith of the ancient churches, which was least to be depended upon, or lasted but a little time; besides written accounts which might more securely be confided in; besides the unanimity of doctrine in all the churches, which was itself an argument that it had been from the beginning; I say, besides all these, the testimony of the Spirit visibly residing in the church, and discovering itself in supernatural operations, that was a further evidence of the truth of the doctrine then generally held. For it is by no means probable, that those primitive churches, so highly favoured from above, so plentifully enlightened and comforted by the holy spirit of God, should be permitted to fall into any dangerous errors, or should not preserve, at least in points of importance, the true and ancient faith, derived from Christ and his apostles. But that this argument may appear to greater advantage, I shall take leave to borrow the excellent words of an abler hand^b, which has set it forth in a very true and strong light.

“ It is, I think, impossible, in a moral sense,
 “ that those good men should successively con-
 “ cur to impose upon the church a false inter-
 “ pretation of notorious passages of the sacred
 “ writings, for the following reasons.

“ 1. That

Dodwell, *Dissert. in Irenæum*. ii. *Dissert. Cyprianic*. iv.
 Remarks on Christianity, &c. Part i. continued, p. 51, &c.

^b Dr. Knight's preface to his eight sermons, p. 4, 5, 6.

Compare Dr. Berriman's historical account, p. 2, 3, &c.

“ 1. That the spirit of God was given to
 “ the church, to guide and instruct it in neces-
 “ sary truth.

“ 2. That according to the records of those
 “ early ages, the extraordinary gifts of the
 “ spirit of God, continuing in the church,
 “ were undoubted evidences of his presence
 “ with it.

“ 3. That it cannot be supposed, while the
 “ Spirit of God was present with the church
 “ in so remarkable a manner, and the church
 “ itself so little removed from the times of the
 “ apostles, that the letter of scripture, espe-
 “ cially in matters of greatest concern, should
 “ be generally understood in another sense than
 “ what was agreeable to the Spirit of God,
 “ and to that which the apostles had taught
 “ and delivered.

“ 4. That the doctors of the church, through
 “ the difficulty of the times, and the dangers
 “ they were exposed to on account of religion,
 “ were more concerned to prepare for the blef-
 “ sings of another world, by recommending truth
 “ to the consciences of men, than to provide
 “ for the flesh, and the enjoyments of the pre-
 “ sent, by dividing the church, and seducing the
 “ simple with pernicious doctrines.

“ 5. That their writings suppose, or expressly
 “ affirm, that scripture was received in an uni-
 “ form sense, in the churches of Christ.

“ 6. The consequence of which is, that when-
 “ soever it appears, that the doctors of the
 “ church

“ church successively agree, from the very beginning, in an uniform^a interpretation of certain passages of the sacred writings, relating to the chief and fundamental articles of revealed truths; such interpretation ought to be received as the mind of the spirit in the aforesaid passages: and conclusions drawn from such expositions are not founded on the doctrines of men, but the mind of the spirit contained and conveyed in the letter of scripture.”

This reasoning I apprehend to be just and solid, and to carry much greater weight with it, than any the most ingenious conceits, and surprising subtleties of the polonian brethren, whereby they have laboured to give something of a gloss or colour to their novel construction of the sacred oracles. But to be a little more distinct and particular, I proceed to build upon the foundations here laid, for the more fully demonstrating the use of antiquity.

VII. The least that we can infer from what hath been already said, is, that the sense of the ancients once known, is an useful check upon any new interpretations of scripture affecting the main doctrines. It has a negative voice, if I may so call it, in such a case. And it is reason sufficient for throwing off any such novel expositions, that they cross upon the undoubted faith of all the ancient churches, or contain some doctrine,

^a Iren. L. iv. C. 35. alias 69.

doctrine, as of moment to be received, which the ancients universally rejected, or never admitted^b. This negative way of arguing, is, I think, generally allowed, and can hardly bear any controversy. Bishop Stillingfleet observes to this purpose, “ That it is sufficient prescription
 “ against any thing which can be alledged out
 “ of scripture, that if it appear contrary to the
 “ sense of the catholic church from the begin-
 “ ning, it ought not to be looked upon as the
 “ true meaning of scripture. All this security
 “ is built upon this strong presumption, that
 “ nothing contrary to the necessary articles
 “ of faith, should be held by the catholic
 “ church, whose very being depends upon the
 “ belief of those articles which are necessary to
 “ salvation^c.”

The famous Daillé, whom no man can suspect of partiality towards the ancients, acknowledges as much as I have mentioned, where he says, “ What probability is there that those
 “ holy doctors of former ages, from whose hands
 “ christianity hath been derived down unto us,
 “ should be ignorant of any of those things,
 “ which

^b Sicut in legibus humanis valet quidem ad sensum indagandum, verborum ac locutionum cognito, antecedentium et consequentium series, consideratio ejus quæ quoque libro tractatur materiæ, sed hæc omnia ita sunt dirigenda, ne impingant in id quod ab initio publicatæ legis de re quæque receptum et judiciis approbatum fuit; ita in legibus divinis quidem, sed humano more per verba, et verborum signa literas, expressis, eadem interpretationi circumdanda sunt repagula. Grotius, Rivet. Apologet. discuss. p. 685. Conf. 724. H

^c Stillingfleet's rational account. C. 2. p. 59.

“ which had been revealed and recommended
 “ by our Saviour as important, and necessary
 “ to salvation?—That they should all of them
 “ have been ignorant of any article that is ne-
 “ cessarily requisite to salvation, is altogether im-
 “ possible. For, after this account, they should
 “ all have been deprived of salvation, which,
 “ I suppose, every honest mind would tremble
 “ at the thought of^d ”

Dr. Whitby, who was not prejudiced on the side of the fathers, seems to carry the point rather far, in these words.

“ In such doctrines as were rejected by the
 “ universal church as heresies, Austin saith truly,
 “ that it was sufficient cause to reject them,
 “ because the church held the contrary, they
 “ being such as did oppose her rule of faith,
 “ or symbol, universally received; and that it
 “ was sufficient to persuade any man, he ought
 “ not to embrace any of the doctrines of here-
 “ tics, as articles of faith, because the church,
 “ who could not be deficient in any point of
 “ necessary faith, did not receive them. This
 “ way of arguing negatively, we therefore, with
 “ St. Austin, do allow: the universal church
 “ knows no such doctrine; ergo, it is no arti-
 “ cle I am obliged to receive as any part of
 “ christian faith^e.” Thus far he at that time:
 and in another treatise which he published in
 Latin

^d Daillé, *Use of the fathers*, C. vi. p. 188, Engl. edit.

^e Whitby's *Treatise of Tradition*, A. D. 1689, Part ii. C. 12. p. 131.

Latin 25 years after, when it is certain he had no very friendly disposition towards the fathers, yet still he thought himself obliged to admit such a negative argument^f as he had before admitted. A negative argument therefore being allowed, (as indeed there is plain reason for it) it must be allowed also, that the fathers are of use to us, so far as such an argument can be of use: and that the ancients may be of great use in the church, in this view, is very apparent, being that they serve as an outwork (which Daillé takes notice of) for the repelling the presumption of those who would forge a new faith^g.

For example, they are of use, in this view, against the romanists, with respect to the novel and supernumerary articles of the Trent creed, or creed of Pope Pius IV. imposed upon the consciences of men, as necessary to salvation.

The ancients are likewise of use to us under the same view, against the socinians, who innovate in doctrines of the highest importance, teaching things contrary to the faith of all the primitive churches; things wherein christian worship

^f Distinguendum est inter traditiones de rebus creditu factuque necessariis, et non necessariis. Traditionibus ad fidem moreisque necessariis fides adhibenda est, utpote sine quibus nec fides nec vita christiana esse potest: adeo ut argumentum negativum in his omnibus certissimum est; hoc vel illud inter fidei morumve dogmata necessaria prius locum non obtinuit, ergo nec hac ætate creditu, factuve necessarium dici possit; quoniam ecclesia in necessariis nunquam deficit. Whitby, Dissertat. de Scriptur. Interpretatione, Præf. p. 94.

^g Daillé, Use of the Fathers, p. 190.

ship as well as faith and hope, are very nearly and deeply concerned. It is sufficient reason for rejecting such novelties, and the interpretations which they are founded upon, that the christian world, in the best and purest times either knew nothing of them, or rejected them.

The like may be said with respect to the arian doctrines, if any man shall presume to obtrude them upon us as articles of faith. It is a sufficient reason for not receiving either them, or the interpretations brought to support them, that the ancients, in the best and purest times, either knew nothing of them, or if they did, condemned them^h. It has indeed been pretended, that the ancients, in general, supposed God the Father to be naturally governor over the Son and Holy Ghost: but no proof has ever been made of it, nor ever can be. On the contrary, it will appear upon a careful inquiry, as I have particularly

^h “ In the doctrine of the deity of Christ, or of the Trinity, though the subtlety of such modern heretics as oppose either of those, may so far prevail on persons, either not of sufficient judgment, or not sufficiently versed in the scriptures, as at present to make them acknowledge the places are not so clear as they imagined them to be; yet their being always otherwise interpreted by the catholic church, or the christian societies of all ages, lays this potent prejudice against all such attempts, as not to believe such interpretations true, till they give a just account why, if the belief of these doctrines were not necessary, the christians of all ages since the apostles times, did so unanimously agree to them, that when any began first to oppose them, they were declared and condemned for heretics for their pains.” Stillingfleet, rational account, C. 2. p. 58.

particularly observed in another placeⁱ, that the ancients never did, never consistently could intend any such thing; but that Arius and his confederates innovated in maintaining that doctrine, and were condemned for it immediately, upon their first introducing it. But it is needless to urge here (had not the course of my argument led to it) that arianism was no matter of necessary faith, in the esteem of the ancients, having proved in these papers that the contrary to it was. Only, I was here to observe the use which might be made of the negative argument, supposing we could go no farther, or had nothing more to plead from antiquity.

VIII. I would next advance a step farther than the mere negative argument can directly carry us: for, I conceive, that a just inference may be drawn from that concession, which will extend our views somewhat beyond what I have just now mentioned. If the ancients could not be universally ignorant of any necessary doctrine, since it is morally absurd that they should be deficient in necessities; by parity of reason it must be allowed, that they could not generally fall into fundamental errors; because that also would be failing in necessities, in as much as nothing can be more necessary in our religious concerns than to stand clear of all pernicious or dangerous mistakes. From whence it follows, that

ⁱ Third defence, or farther Vindication, C. v, p. 108, &c.

that whatever the ancient churches universally admitted as a necessary article of faith, must at the lowest, be safe doctrine^k. And because it is hard to conceive how such a doctrine as we are now upon, could be safe, if it were not true, we may reasonably infer that it is true as well as safe. Thus far I have been pursuing the consequences which appear to follow from the concession made by Dailé and others.

But I apprehend withal, that the same conclusion will more directly and closely follow from the principles before laid down; namely, that morally speaking, it is absurd to suppose that the primitive churches should so universally maintain one and the same doctrine, if they had not received it from the beginning; especially considering the important nature of the doctrine, and how near they lived to the apostolical age, and how remarkably they were blessed, all the time, with plentiful effusions of God's holy Spirit. These considerations taken together, do afford, as I conceive, a positive argument to prove that what the ancients so held as true and important (scripture also, in its easy and most natural sense, countenancing the same) ought to

^k Hic vero ex concessis Dallæanis recte concluditur, et nullum articulum necessarium eos ignorasse; et e fortiore nullâ execrabili hæresi implicitos, nobis errandi duces extitisse——Minime est probabile (judice ipso Dallæo) vel unicum fidei membrum eos latuisse, et multo incredibilius, prolapsos fuisse in errorem perniciosum, seu hæresim sanæ fidei contrariam. Scrivener. contra Dal. p. 222, 223.

to be received by us as scripture doctrine¹, and valued accordingly. Any other pretended sense of scripture, as implying a kind of moral absurdity, ought to be rejected; unless it can be proved to carry such a degree of moral certainty as is more than sufficient to countervail such prescription or prejudice against it. But now as to the arian or socinian interpretations, in this case, they carry no moral certainty at all, to counterpoise the moral absurdity which stands against them: therefore the judgment of the universal church (were there nothing else) ought to overrule their interpretations. For it was morally impossible that the primitive churches should err, in doctrines of that high importance, so soon, or so universally^m. But it is not morally impossible, nor at all unlikely, that those later gentlemen should mistake in commenting upon sacred writ.

The

¹ Cum majorem omnibus quam singulis christianis, et universæ quam particularibus quibuscunque ecclesiis fidem habendam esse nemo dubitet; cum plurima etiam sint in quæ universalis ecclesia per multa post apostolos secula consensit; cum hæc denique universalis ecclesiæ consensus certissima sit, in iis quibus habeatur capitibus, sacræ scripturæ interpretatio; hinc clarissime constat, quali quantoque usui sint antiqui patres, alique omnium ecclesiæ seculorum scriptores, quamque necessario ab iis consulendi sint, quibus ecclesiasticas agitantibus controversias vel sua salus, vel pax ecclesiæ cordi est. — Quicquid de aliis videndum est, ea saltem in quæ omnes ubique ecclesiæ consenserunt, non possunt non certissima esse, et necessario ab omnibus etiamnum retinenda. Beverig. Cod. Can. vindicat. in præem. f. iii.

^m Constat proinde omnem doctrinam quæ cum illis ecclesiis apostolicis, matricibus et originalibus fidei conspiraret, veritati deputandam, sine dubio tenentem quod ecclesiæ ab apostolis, apostoli a Christo, Christus a Deo accepit. Tertul. Præscrip. C. 21.

The sum then of the whole case, in few words, is this. 1. We assert, that the received doctrine of the Trinity is proved directly to be true, and consequently to be important, from scripture itself, according to the known rules of grammar and criticism: and such proof cannot be evaded, or eluded, without doing the greatest violence imaginable to the texts. 2. In the next place, we maintain, that the ancient churches taught the same doctrine as an essential, and condemned the contrary opinion as pernicious and dangerous: which consideration makes it now doubly absurd to interpret scripture in contradiction to that doctrine". 3. The result of the two foregoing considerations, is, that since we have thus proved the truth of our doctrine, and the importance of it, both ways (directly from scripture, and indirectly from the ancients) I say, the result is, that this is the faith which we ought to contend for.

" " The unanimous consent of so many distinct visible
 " churches, as exhibited their several confessions, catechisms, or
 " testimonies of their own or forefathers faith unto the council of Nice, was an argument of the same force and efficacy
 " against Arius and his partakers, as the general consent and
 " practice of all nations, in worshipping a divine power in
 " all ages, is against atheists. Nothing but the ingrafted notion of a Deity could have induced so many several notions,
 " so much different in natural dispositions, in civil discipline
 " and education, to affect or practise the duty of adoration;
 " and nothing but the ingrafted word (as St. James calls the
 " gospel) delivered by Christ and his apostles in the holy
 " scriptures, could have kept so many several churches as
 " communicated their confessions unto that council, in the
 " unity of the same faith." Bishop Patrick, Discourse about Tradition, p. 21. printed A. D. 1683.

for. We are morally certain every way, that it is true, and if true, important of course. And since we have such moral certainty as things of this nature can be conceived to admit of, and such as God has obliged us to submit to and follow in other like cases, it is therefore infallibly certain (that I may once more copy after the great Chillingworth) that, in true wisdom and prudence, we ought to accept this doctrine as revealed by God, and to maintain it with a conscientious care and zeal; and consequently, to decline communion with all such as openly impugn it.

Here I thought to have concluded this chapter, having offered what appeared sufficient for supporting or illustrating the use and value of ecclesiastical antiquity. But I consider, that some perhaps might think it an omission, if I should take no notice of sundry objections which have been frequently urged against the use of antiquity, particularly in controversies of faith. Now, though I apprehend that a clear and just stating of the case (which is what I have been labouring) is the best way of removing objections, as it is leaving them no foundation to stand upon, or none considerable; yet rather than be thought wanting in any respect to a very important subject, I shall endeavour to return particular answers to the most noted objections which have fallen within my observation. The doing it may help to illustrate the subject; as it is considering it under various views, turned
and

and tried every way: and sometimes just answers to objections have the force almost of new proofs, for confirming the positions before asserted. I incline the more to it, because great pains have been taken by many to depreciate the value of antiquity, and to throw contempt upon the primitive fathers: which is a very unjustifiable practice, and is wounding christianity itself through their sides; though some that have done it, might be far from intending it. But I proceed to particulars.

I. It has been sometimes pleaded, that the scriptures are in themselves a perfect rule of faith: what need therefore can there be of fathers, with respect to the fundamental articles^o? To which we answer, that we produce not fathers to superadd new doctrines to scripture, but only to secure the old; not to complete the rule, but more strongly to assert and maintain both its true sense, and whole sense. The more perfect the rule is, the more care and circumspection it demands, that we may preserve it intire, both as to words, and meaning. For if either of them happens to be stolen away, or wrested from us, scripture so maimed or castrated is no longer that perfect rule which Christ has ordained. It is much to be suspected, that many pretend a zeal for scripture, who mean nothing by it, but to have its fences taken down,

^o Whitby, *Dissertat. de Scriptur. Interpret.* in *Præfat.* p. 8, 9.

down, that they may deal the more freely, or rudely with it. They would exclude the ancients, to make room for themselves, and throw a kind of flight upon the received interpretations, only to advance their own. Such commonly has been the way, and therefore there is the less regard to be paid to magnificent words. They complain sometimes, that interpreting scripture by the ancients, is debasing its majesty, and throwing Christ out of his throne^p. But we think, that Christ never sits more secure or easy in his throne, than when he has his most faithful guards about him; and that none are so likely to strike at his authority, or to aim at dethroning him, as they that would displace his old servants, only to make way for new ones; who may either obtrude themselves without call, or may be unfurnished for the employ, or not well affected to his person and government. But to speak out of figure, and to come closer to the business, the perfection of scripture is a point allowed, and is no part of the question between us: the main question is, how we may be most secure of reaping the full benefits of that perfection, whether with the light of antiquity before us, or without it? We know, how Faustus Socinus, under colour of extolling the perfection of scripture, studied nothing so much as to blazon the perfection of his own parts, and abilities, deserting the ancients, and

^p Whitby, *ibid.* p. 9.

and trusting only to himself and his uncle Lælius⁹. He presumed to set up his own fond conceits, as the measure of all truth: which, in effect, was advancing a new rule of faith, and forcing scripture to a compliance with it; preferring the roving of his own imagination before the wisdom of heaven. It might be shewn on the other hand, that those who have least indulged their own fancies, but have adhered strictly to antiquity, in the prime things, have done most honour to the perfection of scripture, and have kept the rule of faith intire. This therefore is the way, rather than the other.

I may add, that when we say that scripture is perfect, we mean, generally, as to the matter of it, which is full and complete to be a rule of life and manners, without taking in any additional rule to join with it. But if we speak of scripture being perfect in regard to words, or style, we can mean only, that it is as perfect as words can be, and words (to us now) of a dead language. Whatever imperfection necessarily goes along with all languages, must of course go along with scripture language; which though dictated
from

⁹ Neminem enim ego in iis rebus de quibus in responsione illâ meâ disseritur, ex iis qui hodie vivunt, ullâ ex parte magistrum agnosco; sed Deum tantummodo præceptorem habui sacrasque literas. Quinetiam in universâ ipsâ divinarum rerum scientiâ, quæcunque tandem illa in me sit, præter unum Lælium, patrum meum, qui jam diu mortuus est, vel potius præter quædam paucula ab ipso conscripta, et multa annotata, nullum prorsus magistrum me habere contigit. Socin. Ep. ad Squarcialupum, app. Tom. i. p. 362.

from heaven, or conducted by the Spirit of God, is yet adapted to the manner of men, and must take its construction from the common rules of interpretation agreed upon among men. Now, if the fathers, as living nearer the fountain, had some opportunities which we want, and might know some things much better than we at this distance can pretend to do, why should we neglect or despise any light or help which they can give for our direction, in settling the sense of scripture? In human laws, as I have hinted above, it has been always thought a good rule of interpretation (not excluding any other good rule) to observe, upon what occasion the laws were made, what was their general scope or view, and how they were understood at their first framing, or immediately after, and to recollect how the practice ran. Hence it is, that reports, and precedents, and adjudged cases are so highly useful in interpreting human laws. The case is not much different in divine laws, being that they also are written in human language, and their sense is to be investigated, and cleared up by the like human means. If the fathers were fallible, so also are we: and if they, with all their advantages, might misconstrue scripture, so may we much more. Therefore there is no prudence in throwing off their assistance as useless, or superfluous. Even fallible men may be useful instructors to others as fallible. And in a multitude of counsellors,

counsellors, especially such counsellors, there is safety^r.

II. But it is farther pleaded, that scripture is plain in all necessities, and therefore needs no illustration from the ancients^s. We allow, that scripture is plain in necessities; yea, it is what we urge and contend for: and there is nothing which offends us more, than that many persons will endeavour notwithstanding, by violent contortions, far fetched subtleties, and studied evasions, to elude and frustrate these plain things. Such conduct on the adverse side, makes it the more necessary to have recourse to antiquity, for the greater security against all such attempts. For while scripture is plain, antiquity is plain also; and two plain things are better than one. God himself hath taught us, by adding his oath to his promise, not to think any confirmation superfluous, which he is pleased to afford us. His word alone might be safely depended upon, being certain and infallible. But two immutable things afford the stronger consolation^t; and God considers the infirmities of mankind. In like manner, though scripture be very plain to reasonable men, so far as concerns necessities, yet by taking in antiquity to it, the evidence, upon the whole, becomes both plainer^u, and stronger. There is so much weakness commonly

^r Prov. xi. 14.

^s Whitby, Dissertat. in Præf. p. 10, 19.

^t Hebr. vi. 17, 18.

^u N. B. It should be observed that the word plain is an equivocal word, and of indeterminate meaning, till it be carefully distinguished. It is a relative, and means plain to some or other.

monly in human nature, and so much reluctance shewn to the reception of divine truths, that we have need of all the plain things we can any where procure: and had we twenty more as plain as these, we could make use of them all, and indeed should be obliged to do so, lest otherwise we should be found guilty of despising the blessings of heaven. It is certain, that there is something very particular in the concerns of religion, that plain things there, have not the same force or weight as they have any where else. It is the only subject in the world, wherein a
man

other. To God all things are plain; to angels more things than to man. Doctrines plain to some men are not so to others, on account of ignorance, inattention, prejudice, or any infirmity, natural, or contracted. Things also may be plain by the help of means, which are not so without the use of such means. Moreover, there are degrees of plainness, for it consists not in a point, but admits of a latitude. Besides, the plainest things in the world taken in a right point of view, may cease to be plain, when put into a wrong one; when industriously obscured, embroiled, and intangled, by snares and fallacies, by involving many things in one (which should be kept separate) or by expressing them in ambiguous, equivocal terms, or by perplexing them with captious and sophistical questions. There are degrees also of attention, upon which the degrees of plainness do very much depend: and attention depends upon the will, and the will is variously influenced by motives, external or internal.

But though plainness be really a relative, and often varies according to the person, and his degree of attention, capacity, inclination, &c. yet we have formed some kind of idea of an absolute plainness, abstracted from particular persons; and we mean by it, as to the point now in hand, such a plainness in the thing itself, or in the words expressing it, as any one of tolerable capacity, with a reasonable attention, and by the use of the ordinary helps, or means, may competently understand. In this sense, or by this standard, fundamentals are commonly said to be plain.

man may dispute the most certain facts, and most indubitable proofs, and yet be allowed to be in his senses. For if any one, in the common affairs of life, were to make it a rule to believe nothing but what he sees, or were to reject the faith of all history, he would undoubtedly be despised or pitied by every body, as not well in his wits. Seeing then that the case of religion is so widely different from all others, and that the plainest evidences there often lose their effect, we can never be too solicitous in accumulating evidence upon evidence, and testimony upon testimony, to do the most we can towards relieving the weakness, or conquering the reluctance of men slow to believe. And when we have done the best we can, and have pursued every reasonable method we could think of, we are yet to look upon it as sufficient, only because we can do no more. Wherefore, no plainness of scripture can ever be justly thought to supersede the use of antiquity; unless it could be supposed, that no additional light, or strength can be borrowed from it: which is too extravagant a supposition to need any confutation; besides that I have already obviated every suggestion of that kind, in the former part of this chapter.

If it be said, that common christians, at least, can reap no benefit from antiquity, nor make any use of it; that will not be a reason sufficient for throwing it aside, so long as the learned may. But even common christians do enjoy the benefit of it, if not at first hand, yet at the second, third,

or fourth; and that suffices here, as well as in other cases of as weighty concernment. How do they know, for instance, that scripture is the word of God? They know it immediately or proximately from their proper guides, or other instructors; who in the last resort, learn it from the ancients. So then, ordinary christians may thus remotely have the use of antiquity (not to mention other nearer ways^a) with respect to the sense of scripture, as well as with regard to its authenticity: and their faith may be both strengthened, and brightened by this additional reinforcement. “The people are to understand
 “the grounds of their faith, and to judge, by
 “the best helps they can, what doctrine is
 “agreeable to scripture. But among those helps,
 “we take in, not barely the assistance of their
 “own guide, but the evidence he brings, as to
 “the sense of the teaching church, in the best
 “and purest ages^b.” But to return.

We admit, as I before said, that scripture is very plain in necessities. As, for instance, nothing can be plainer from scripture, than that Christ is God, and *over all God blessed for ever, true God, great God, Jehovah*, and the like; and that divine attributes, and divine works are ascribed to him, and divine worship also, to make every thing clear, and to cut off all reasonable handle for dispute^c. But notwithstanding

^a See this matter considered more at large, in Bishop Hare's *Scripture vindicated*, p. 111, &c.

^b *Stillingleet's Answer to J. S.'s Catholic Letters*, p. 58.

^c See my *Sermons*, p. 276, 277.

ing that all these things are so plain, yet considering that we are not the first men that ever looked into scripture, but that others, who had as good eyes as we and as upright hearts, and a competent measure of common sense (besides some peculiar advantages beyond what we can pretend to) have perused the same scripture, before us; I say considering these things, it would be something of a mortification to us, or would appear somewhat strange, if such persons should not have found the same doctrine then, which we have the pleasure to find now. For whatever is really plain to moderns, and necessary, must, one would think, by parity of reason, or for a stronger reason, have been plain to the ancients also, and necessary to them as well as to us. Accordingly, upon examining, we find, that the same doctrine was plain to them, even so far as to be looked upon as an essential: a consideration which adds the more strength to what we had before proved from scripture, as the want of such concurring suffrage would have been a perplexing difficulty; I mean, while we have such ancient monuments to look into, and to compare. Indeed, if they were all lost, burnt, or otherwise extinguished, our scripture proof (supposing scripture itself to want no proof) would stand firm without them. But when we have the ancients to compare with scripture, and know that, in the very nature of the thing, they ought to tally with each other; the ancients

now, of consequence, must be either a very strong confirmation as to any doctrines held for articles of faith, or as strong an objection. They are considerable disadvantages where they run counter, and as considerable advantages where they favour.

III. It is sometimes pleaded, that scripture is its own best interpreter, by comparing texts with texts, and therefore there is no need of fathers in the case; for in the best we have all ^c.

In reply to which, we are very ready to allow, that comparing scripture with scripture is a very good method of interpretation, yea and the best and most satisfactory of any, to every rational mind. But still we do not see reason why it should be thought to supersede any other that is good. For, after we have thereby obtained all the home light we can get, where will be the harm of admitting still further light, if we can procure it, from abroad? The more we have of both kinds, the better: every additional increase or improvement, though it were but small in comparison, yet has its use, either for confirming the weak and wavering, or for comforting them who are strong in faith, or for confuting and confounding novellists; but most of all for reclaiming those who are over apt to be led by authority, and great names, perhaps of mere moderns. For
certainly,

^c Whitby, Dissert. Præf. p. 12.

certainly, if authority, or great names, or even numbers are of any weight; ancients are preferable to moderns, considered as such, fathers and councils to private dogmatizers, and the christian world to a few gainfayers. Such being the manifest and constant use of the argument drawn from antiquity, superadded to scripture, there is great reason for taking it in after scripture, that we may have the benefit of both.

The excellent Buddeus, otherwise a very judicious writer, appears not so clear, or not so accurate in his account of this matter, as might be wished. He gives his judgment, "That neither natural reason, nor tradition should be the rule of interpreting, but scripture itself, and the analogy of faith^d." Had he said, neither one nor other, but all together, I think, he had said right. But as he has taken in only two of the things, excluding the rest, as it seems, from bearing a part in the interpretation of scripture, he appears to me to have judged wrong upon the case, or at least to have fallen short of his wonted accuracy. For, certainly, he ought to have allowed something to natural reason, and

^d A socinianis, non minus quam romanensibus discedimus, dum nec rationem, nec traditiones (aut ecclesiæ auctoritatem) pro regulâ et normâ interpretandi scripturam agnoscimus, sed scripturam ex scripturâ secundum analogiam fidei explicandam contendimus: quam quidem viam et rectissimam et tutissimam esse, res ipsa ostendit, et facile perspiciat qui cuncta rite sequi ponderavit. Buddei Isagog. Vol. ii. p. 1793. Conf. ejusdem Præfat. ad Salom. Glasii opera. Edit. Lips. A. D. 1725.

and something also to antiquity, though not every thing. There is a great deal of difference between admitting either of them to govern absolutely, and throwing them quite out; and there is a just medium between giving each of them a negative, and making either of them sole umpire. There are many considerations to be taken in, for the proceeding rightly in the interpretation of scripture; and all of them respectively must have their share, as they have their weight. To exemplify what I mean; true interpretation of scripture cannot, in any case whatever, run counter to any plain certain principle of natural reason (in as much as truth can never be contrary to truth) nor, in any case whatever, to scripture itself rightly interpreted; nor, in any case whatever, to the analogy of faith before proved (which amounts, nearly to the same with the preceding) nor without the utmost necessity, to the natural, usual, unforced sense of the words; nor, so far as concerns fundamentals, to the universal judgment of the first and purest ages of the church. These, as I conceive, are the butts and boundaries within which every true interpretation is confined. And whenever any pretended interpretation is found to break through them, or through any of them, there needs no more, to pronounce it false. To express the same thing affirmatively, which before I have negatively, when any interpretation of scripture has all those five characters, (viz. natural reason,
parallel

parallel places of scripture, analogy of faith, propriety of language, and countenance of antiquity) to vouch directly for it, then it is as strongly supported as it is possible for an interpretation to be. If it has only some of those positive characters, or one only, the rest not interfering, it may be a good interpretation; but the more it has, so much the surer*. For example:

* Dr. Rogers, in one of his Sermons (posth. Sermon. iv. p. 95, &c.) explains the whole matter somewhat differently, but agreeing, in the main, with what I have here offered. His thoughts upon the point are comprized in the particulars here following, which I shall produce in his own words, as nearly as an abridgment will permit.

“ 1. Many places of sacred writ are so plain, that no man, who reads or hears them, in a language he is acquainted with, can doubt of their meaning.

“ 2. The sense of other places we collect from rational deductions, comparing one scripture with another.

“ 3. Other places there are which require the knowledge of history of ancient facts and customs, of early tradition, and primitive acceptation, to determine their sense.

“ 4. The inspiration of the scriptures supposed, we cannot consistently with such supposition, either from the construction of the words, or from deductions of reason, or from authority, admit any proposition as the intended sense of scripture, which contradicts any manifest truth.

“ 5. Neither can we admit contradictory expositions of the same or different places of scripture.

“ In the two last cases, we conclude negatively with the clearest assurance: but when we go on to ascertain the meaning positively, the sense of scripture which we receive in the first way, by an immediate view, appears to us with greatest evidence: and the sense we collect in the second way, by rational deductions, is more evident than what we receive in the third way, from the affirmations of authority.”

So, this excellent writer resolves the positive characters of true and just interpretation, into immediate view, rational deductions, and authority all having their proper weight of evi-

example: the doctrine I am here defending, has four of the said characters positively for it, (viz. tenor of scripture, analogy of faith, propriety of language, and antiquity) and the fifth, which is natural reason, is not against it: therefore it is a very just and reasonable interpretation. So many plain legible characters of truth ought, in all equity, to overrule any seeming, or conjectural repugnancies as to the nature of the thing confessedly mysterious, so long as there is no plain contrariety to any known truth.

Hitherto I have been answering those objections which aim at setting the fathers aside as needless, being superseded (as is thought) by the perfection or plainness, or fulness of sacred writ. The remaining objections, which I am to take notice of, are of another kind, striking more directly at the reputation of the fathers, in order to insinuate, that they are by no means qualified to serve the purposes they are brought for, being more likely to perplex than to instruct a reader, more apt to mislead and draw us aside, than to set us right.

IV. The obscurity of the fathers makes up one half of the learned Daillé's treatise upon that

dence respectively, but in different degrees. The two negative characters are checks upon all the positive ones, to ascertain their application, and to prevent the pushing any of them too far. This account, in substance, differs so little from what I have offered, that it appears to contain much the same thoughts placed in another light, or differently ranged. It may be of use to a reader to take the same thing in two views, and so to form his own judgment, as he sees best, out of both: and therefore I have here presented him with both.

that subject. I need not be very particular in examining into that plea here, because it will come up again, in part, under another article lower down, where I shall consider it more distinctly. For the present, it may suffice to observe: 1. That Mr. Daillé, in some instances, rhetoricates upon the subject, and has frequently overstrained. 2. Many things have been cleared up since he wrote that piece; (since the year 1631) some by himself, more by others after him: so that what might appear to be of some force then, can have little or none now. 3. Particular answers have been returned to the several articles on the head of obscurity, by those who have professedly undertaken it^f, besides what has been done occasionally in new editions of fathers, or in bibliothèques, or in critical dissertations. 4. Whatever truth there may be in the objection, as to sundry controverted points of inferior moment, yet it affects not the cause now before us. For Daillé himself allows, that the fathers are generally clear enough in points fundamental, whereof this is one, in his judgment at least. He writes thus: “ You shall there meet with
“ very strong and solid proofs of those fun-
“ damental principles of our religion, touching
“ which

^f Scrivener. adv. Dallæum. Par. I. per tot.

Reeves's Preface to the Apologists, p. 37, &c.

Natalis Alexander, Hist. Eccl. Sæc. ii. Diss. xvi. C. 22.

p. 537, &c.

Beverege's Cod. Can. vindicat. Procem. Sect. viii.

“ which we are all agreed; and also many excellent things laid open, tending to the right understanding of those mysteries, and also of the scriptures wherein they are contained. In this particular, their authority may be of good use to you, and may serve as a probable argument of the truth^s.” So then, whatever obscurity may otherwise be found in the fathers (like as in scripture itself) the cause which we have now in hand, appears to be but little concerned in it, according to the judgment of that learned man, who made the most of the objection, as to other matters. For, though he sometimes points out obscure passages, as he conceived them to be, relating to things fundamental, yet, upon the whole, he apprehended, that those doctrines might be plainly enough traced up to the very days of the apostles, and that the fathers might be exceeding useful to us in that view, and for that purpose.

V. It has been frequently objected, that many of the fathers have erred, and sometimes grossly: and large collections of their real and supposed mistakes, have been drawn out, and presented to public view^h. Now, indeed, if any man should presume to say, that

^s Daillé of the right use of the fathers, Part II. p. 184.

Si in vivis jam esset [Dallæus] quam ægrè ferret vir pientissimus, si aliqui reperirentur qui argumentis, quibus ipse causam pontificiam adeo feliciter debellavit, ad labefactandam et subvertendam Nicænam fidem abuterentur. Cave, Ep. Apologet.

P. 19.

^h Daillé, Part II. C. 4. p. 60, &c.

Whitby, Dissertat. in Præfat. f. iv. p. 15, &c.

that the fathers were inspired, or infallible in what they wrote, such a collection of errors might be of use for the confuting the false presumption. But how it affects their credit or character as witnesses of the church's prime doctrines, in their times, appears not. It is not uncommon for those very fathers, where they give a wrong and false opinion, to make a true discovery of the church's sentiments, in that very instance, contrary to their own. Therefore a reader should know how to distinguish between delivering an opinion, and reporting a fact; as also, between appealing to the fathers as unerring judges, and appealing to them as faithful witnesses.

But to speak more directly to the charge of errors, it may be justly pleaded in abatement, that upon a careful review, many of them have been found to be purely imaginary, mere mistakes, or misrepresentations of the too precipitate correctors: and of those that are real, most will be seen in things only of a problematical kind, and of a slight natureⁱ. Or if they be of a more grievous sort, they were the mistakes of some few, and were either not universal^k, or not ancient, and

ⁱ *Monebo tantum, in patrum scriptis dogmata philosophica a fidei articulis probe esse distinguenda. In his, sacris literis et catholicæ traditioni strictius se alligant, et in re summâ omnes conveniunt: in illis, majori utuntur libertate, et opiniones sæpius adhibent quæ in philosophorum scholis ventilari solebant; quin et in explicandis fidei mysteriis quandoque voces e scholâ philosophicâ petitas admovent, sed ad christianum sensum accommodatas. Cave, Epist. Apologet. p. 48.*

^k See Grotius de Jur. B. et P. L. i. C. 2. f. 9. p. 60.

and never insisted upon as articles of faith, and terms of communion. So that whatever errors are discovered in any father or fathers, they do not invalidate the argument drawn from the universal agreement of the ancient churches in the prime things. However, there have not been wanting, upon occasion, learned hands¹ to draw up apologies for the fathers either in separate discourses, or in prefaces to new editions, or by way of note, or the like; by which means most of those unworthy aspersions have been happily removed, and the black catalogues much reduced. A learned foreigner^m, not long ago, being justly sensible of the mischievous tendency of that unnatural practice of some christians, in throwing contempt upon the brightest ornaments of the christian church, took the pains to consider the particular articles of doctrine upon which the fathers have been wrongfully suspected, or charged, and to do them justice against their indiscreet, or over censorious accusers.

Since that time, I do not know a warmer or keener adversary that the fathers have had, than

¹ Thorndicius de Rat. et Jur. Fin. controv. C. 25.

Scrivener, adv. Dall. Par. II. C. iv. p. 185.

Cavii Epistola Apologetica. Reeve's Preface, p. 67, &.

Remarks on Christianity as old, &c. with regard to primitive Antiquity, Part I. continued, printed for Crownfield,

1733.

^m Zornius Hamburgensis. Vindiciæ patrum per omnes fidei christianæ articulos, oppositæ Joanni Dallao: una cum selectis observationibus contra recentiores patrum censores, Anglos, Belgas, Gallos. Inter Opuscul. Sac. Tom. i. A. D. 1709. Giesæ Hassorum, p. 659. Edit. Nup. A. D. 1731.

than Monsr. Barbeyrac, professor of civil law at Groningen, and known to the learned world by his French translations of Pufendorf and Grotius, and his learned notes upon both. He attacks the fathers principally upon the head of morality, (as his subject led him to do) and seems to exert his utmost endeavours to sink their reputation for sense, and conduct, and even for conscience too, in some measure, in order to strike them out of all credit or authorityⁿ. His work has twice appeared in English, as well as in French) and may therefore deserve some notice in this place, as much as I may have room for, not to make too long an excursion

That satyr upon the fathers (for it deserves no better name) had not long been abroad, before Mr. Ceillier, a learned Roman catholic, drew up a formal answer to it, of which I have seen little more than the title^o, and a few extracts. Afterwards, the learned Buddeus animadverted pretty largely upon him, detecting some of his mistakes, but with great tenderness; moderating, as it were, between Mr. Ceillier and him, in respect of several particulars. ^pBuddeus was himself not the most zealous admirer of the fathers; and therefore what he says in their
favour,

ⁿ Prefatory discourse to his French version of Pufendorf; since rendered into English, and prefixed to the English edition of 1729, sect. ix, x. p. 18, &c.

^o Apologie de la Morale des Peres de l'Eglise contre les injustes accusations du Sieur Jean Barbeyrac, Paris. 1718.

^p Buddeus, Isagog. Vol. i. p. 620—642.

favour, may be justly thought not to exceed in any respect, but to fall within compass. Some officious gentleman amongst us, having met with Mons. Barbeyrac's French treatise, published it separately in our language, prefixing a kind of boyish title^a to it, and recommending it with some airs of insult, such as are frequently incident to little minds. Not long after, an ingenious gentleman printed a reply^r, to rebuke the translator for his rudeness, and at the same time to defend the fathers against the injurious accusations of the author himself: which he has effectually performed, with good learning, and solid judgment.

Now, seeing that so much has been done already, I may content myself with a few strictures, or brief reflexions. In justice to the fathers, and to primitive christianity struck at through their sides, it ought to be told, that the learned civilian has not dealt fairly with the public in that article. He has not been careful about the facts upon which he grounds his censure, but has often taken them upon trust from others, transcribing their oversights, or partial accounts. Indeed, he makes a kind of apology for his taking so much at second hand: for he says, "He designedly pitched upon examples which had been already remarked and produced by others, and are extant in books
" most

^a The Spirit of Ecclesiastics of all sects and ages, &c. 1722.

^r The Spirit of infidelity detected. By a Believer, 1723.

“ most common and easy to be had^s.” But then he should have enquired whether those examples had not been already replied to, and competently cleared up, and whether, at least, they were not capable of it. And he should have considered further, whether the authors whom he copies from, were all persons to be intirely relied upon in what they say, as men of known learning, judgment, candor, and modesty; not prejudiced against the fathers, nor otherwise apt to be censorious, and over severe in discovering imaginary faults, or exposing real ones. Before one determines any thing as to the character of the fathers from second hand reports, it would be proper to inquire whether their accusers were themselves men of clear and unexceptionable characters. It is no excuse to a person of learning and abilities, that he suffered himself to be imposed upon by others, in a matter which required care, and faithfulness.

Besides his too often deceiving himself, or others with false facts, even those that are true, in part, or in the main, are yet seldom placed in a true light. Every real or seeming fault of the ancients is rhetorically aggravated, the hardest construction commonly put upon it, and no favourable allowances are brought in to qualify; but after saying the unkindest things which he had any colour for, and a great deal of art used to contrive such colour,
he

^s Prefatory Discourse, f. x. p. 33.

he forgets to afford them their due praises in any thing, to countenance the obloquy. So that were a reader to form his idea of the fathers, only by what he finds in that representation, he would go near to make it the very reverse of their true and just character. I cannot here take upon me to criticize the whole work; that has been done already by abler hands. But I shall mention a few particulars, to give the readers a taste of his way and manner, whereby they may competently judge of the rest.

The author falls first upon Athenagoras, and charges him with seeming to establish the worship of angels^t. But this is a false report. Athenagoras neither says it, nor seems to say it. Indeed Dupin, whether to favour the Romish cause, or whether by mere forgetfulness or oversight, had said the same thing. But Mons. Barbeyrac understands the nature of evidence too well to apprehend, that the retailing a misreport can amount to a proof. He has another complaint against the same Athenagoras for disallowing second marriages. The fact is true in some sense or other; but what second marriages, is the question. Might not Athenagoras mean, marrying again after wrongful divorce? A very learned man^u has pleaded much, and well, for that construction: and it is favoured by Athenagoras's^w grounding
his

^t Prefatory discourse, f. ix. p. 18.

^u Suicer. Thesaur. in voce *διαγamos*, p. 895. Zorn. Opusc. Tom. i. 613.

^w Athenag. Legat. p. 130.

his doctrine upon our Lord's own words" relating to such second marriages.

And though he speaks against the marriage as not good after the death of the wife, yet he may be understood only of such wife, wrongfully divorced before. For he thought, that the adultery before incurred, by marrying in her life time, did not cease by her death. The marriage contracted in adultery, like an error in the first concoction, could never be fully corrected, but would still retain its primitive impurity, as having been null, and wrong from the first. If his words may admit that sense, it is sufficient. For an accuser is bound to make good his allegation, and the old rule is, *in dubiis benigniora semper præferenda*. I may add, that Athenagoras has been always reputed a man of the church. And yet it is certain that the doctrine here charged upon him, was condemned by the church in the montanists, and novatians. Which is a further presumption in his favour, and seems to justify the mild and candid construction of the words in question.

The next man Mr. B. falls upon, is Clemens of Alexandria, whom he uses more unkindly than he had before used Athenagoras. He charges him with three special faults^x. 1. With teaching stoical paradoxes, for christian doctrine. 2. With maintaining that "Christ and " his apostles had not any passions at all." 3. With justifying

^w Mark x. 11. Matt. xix. 9. Luke xvi. 18.

^x Prefatory Discourse, p. 19.

justifying the idolatry of the pagans. The first article appears captious and frivolous. For what if Clemens, whether the better to reconcile the stoics to christianity, or whether to turn their own artillery upon them, made use of their language and phraseology, to recommend true and sound christian principles by^y; where was the harm? Or what was there in it, which might not well become so wise and so good a man? Let Mr. B. put himself in Clemens's place, and then consider, whether he could do any thing better or more commendable in those circumstances.

The second article is founded in nothing but misconstruction, and was cleared up long ago by the learned Dr. Cave^z, and by others^a after him: not to mention what the benedictines had said more largely, in defence of Hilary against the same accusation^b.

The third article is intirely without grounds; a conclusion drawn without premises to support it^c, a false inference charged upon very innocent words, in contradiction to the whole tenor of Clemens's writings. Is this dealing fairly with the ancients, or with the public?

Besides

^y See Spirit of Infidelity detected, p. 31.

^z Cave, Epist. Apolog. p. 50, &c.

^a Natal. Alexand. E. H. f. ii. Dissert. 8. p. 395.
Nourii Apparatus ad Biblioth. max. Vol. i. p. 968.

^b Præfat. General. f. iii. p. 30, &c.

^c Vid. Buddei Isagog. p. 623.

Spirit of Infidelity detected, p. 33.

Besides these particular charges upon Clemens, he has some others more general, which are either injurious, or frivolous. He blames him for want of method and coherence, for being full of declamation and mystical allusion, and the like^d. Which kind of discourse is itself declamatory, and detracting, not becoming a person of candor, or gravity, who would make allowances for circumstances, and times, and weigh things in an equal balance. Why must every author walk in trammels, and be confined to rules of art? Immethodical collections are useful in their kind, and ought to have their proper commendation. But it is further said, as from Le Clerc, that "Clemens's pædagogues abounds with maxims excessively rigid, and far remote from any thing in practice." We might except to Le Clerc, as to a person of uncommon delicacy, known to lean generally to the severe side, and none of the best natured or most happy in his censures^e, but prejudiced, by his principles, against the primitive fathers; jealous of a reputation which, he saw, stood in his way, and much afraid of their superiority. Perhaps, after all, he mistakes Clemens's

^d Prefatory Discourse, p. 19.

^e Vid. Perizonius in *Ægypt. Origin. præfat.* p. 8. *Curtius Vindicat.* p. 10—23. 185.—191.

Jenkins, *Defens. Augustin. adv. Phereponum. Præf.* p. 9.

Reflections on Learning, p. 235, &c.

Continuation of the Answer of the Hist. of Oracles, Præf. p. 47, &c.

Cave, *Epist. Apologet.* p. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Cum multis aliis.

Clemens's meaning: or if he does not, his censure may be more an argument of the present degeneracy, than of Clemens's excessive rigour or austerity. I shall only add, that before we blame the ancients for too strict a morality (an error, if it be one, on the right hand) we ought to be well apprized of the circumstances of those times. For, diversity of circumstances requires a diversity in the application of the same general rules, and prescribes as different a conduct.

I shall not go on to the other fathers whom this worthy gentleman has animadverted upon. I have given enough for a sample, in the two first. But I shall proceed to observe something with respect to his general manner of carrying on the impeachment. After he has done with the particulars, charged upon the fathers man by man, he pretends to have demonstrated clearly, that the most celebrated doctors of the six first centuries were but bad masters, and very poor guides in matters of morality. Here we see, what it was that he aimed at; though he has demonstrated nothing, but a strong inclination to detract from true and great worth. There is an artificial confusedness in his throwing six centuries together. Three or a little more will be enough for us to insist upon, so far as our argument from antiquity is concerned. Every body knows that corruptions came in gradually, more and more every day,
after

after the world, as it were, crept into the church^f. We make a distinction between the elder and the later times. It will not be easy to persuade us, that in those best and purest ages, when christian practice was in the height of perfection, that the theory of it was so very lame and defective, as he is pleased to intimate; or that the guides and masters were so exceeding low, or bad, when the scholars or disciples were, for the most part, eminently good. If any one doubts of the fact, he may satisfy himself by looking into the accounts given both by christians and pagans^g; such as make it evident, that the morals of that time were the admiration and envy of the heathen world then, as they are an excellent pattern^h for the christian world since. The author
may

^f Scribere disposui ab Adventu Salvatoris usque ad nostram ætatem, id est ab apostolis usque ad nostram temporis facem, quomodo et per quos Christi ecclesia nata sit, et adulta, perfectionibus creverit, et martyriis coronata sit. Et postquam ad Christianos principes venerit, potentiâ quidem et divitiis major, sed virtutibus minor facta sit. Hieronym. vit. Malch. Opp. Vol. iv. p. 91.

^g The testimonies are collected into one view, by Cave in his primitive Christianity.

Bingham, in his Christian Antiquities, B. vi. C. i.

Fabricius, Salutaris Lux Evangelii, C. x. p. 194, &c.

Baltus's Answer to Fontenelle's Hist. of Oracles, Vol. ii. p. 97.

^h Dr. Wotton, in a treatise where he intended to extol the moderns, and to adjudge them the preference as often as he could, yet took care to give this testimony to ancient christianity :

“ It is certain that many of the ablest of the ancient fathers
“ were excellent casuists; as indeed every man who has a right
“ judgment, an honest mind, and a thorough acquaintance with
“ the design of our blessed Saviour revealed in the gospel, must

may conceive as highly as he pleases, of modern morality, but impartial judges will think it no commendation of it to have it set at variance with primitive christianity. To differ from that standard, in any thing material, is to come short of it, supposing circumstances to be the same. Neither is want of artificial method any more an objection against the ancients, than against scripture itself, the best ethics of any.

But to proceed with our author, he runs off for a while into declamatory invective against those who are jealous of the honour of the fathers. He pities them with all his heart, thinking it inhuman to insult themⁱ; but doing it all the time. Then he gravely tells his reader, a formal untruth, that they tacitly suppose the fathers to have been infallible^k; as if he had intended only to guard against a false notion of the infallibility of the fathers^l. But there is a very wide distance between supposing them infallible, and representing them as bad masters, very poor guides, &c. This learned gentleman, I presume, does not pretend to be infallible; and yet he might think himself ill used, if represented as a bad master,

or

“ of necessity be. And if at this distance many of their decisions seem over severe, there is as great at least (if not greater) reason to suspect that the complaints now-a-days raised against them, may arise from our degeneracy, as from their unwarrantable strictness.” Wotton’s *Reflections on ancient and modern learning*, p. 369.

ⁱ Prefatory Discourse, p. 25.

^k Ibid. p. 25.

^l Ibid. p. 26.

or a very poor guide. There is a medium between the extremes.

He brings up again, soon after, the charge of gross errors, most profound ignorance of what they ought to have known; adding, that most of them, more or less, were led by passion, and that their conduct frequently was neither regular, nor justifiable^m. Well then, surely this is something more than barely saying, they were fallible men; and one may presume to contradict such a misreport of them, without maintaining that they were infallible. How will this learned gentleman be able to prove that the character he has here given is their true general character, such as will suit the three first centuries? Church history is flatly contrary, and the christian world hitherto has been used to honour them with the title of the best and purest ages. He refers us twiceⁿ to some tart reflections of Gregory Nazianzen upon some of the clergy in his time, about A. D. 381. Perhaps Nazianzen himself might be led by resentment to aggravate in some measure; for he was a man of spirit, had some warmth, and might drop too severe a censure, under a sense of the ill usage he had met with. But supposing his censure to be strictly just, what argument is there in it? The clergy about 381 were guilty of many and great faults, therefore the whole order were as guilty all along, for 280 years together; reckoning

^m Prefatory Discourse, p. 26.

ⁿ Ibid. p. 18, 34.

reckoning from the apostolic age. I see not by what rules of reasoning, such consequence can be drawn°. Every body knows how miserably the church had been rent asunder by parties and factions, from the time that arianism broke out; that is, for 60 years backwards, or thereabout: by means whereof, mens passions were inflamed, and their tempers soured. But how does this affect the elder times, when all the bishops of the christian church were in the main unanimous, and held amicably together against jews, pagans and heretics? Allow that heats and animosities prevailed much among churchmen, towards the end of the fourth century, and that the state of the church at that time was become very corrupt, according to the accounts given by Nazianzen: but then allow also, that such corruptions were of recent date, and that the like had not been seen in elder times, before the rise of Arius, as Nazianzen himself testifies^p. And he had a vast esteem of one council, at least, the council of Nice, older than what he speaks of. So then, if Nazianzen is a competent evidence to found the objection upon, let him be so also on our side, to supply
us

° Exemplum profert [Clericus] Concilii C. P. 1. quo Gregorius Nazianzenus factionis quorundam Artibus vexatus, sede suâ cessit potius quam expulsus est; unde fervidioris ingenii vir πολυθρίλλητον illud de synodis iudicium protulit. Sed fac hanc illamve synodum iniquè se gessisse, et nullam veritatis, nullam innocentiae rationem habuisse: an mox omnes sunt damnandæ, rejiciendæ, exterminandæ? Cave, Epist. Apologet. p. 25.

^p Nazianz. Orat. xxi. p. 380.

us with a proper answer, as far as our cause can be concerned in the question.

The author proceeds to contest the right which the fathers have been thought to have, to the very modest title of propagators of the christian religion. He thinks, it should be given to the apostles only^a. But certainly the fathers succeeded to the apostles in the great work of propagating christianity, and therefore were as properly, (though not altogether so eminently) propagators of it, as the apostles themselves. Yea, they also were eminently such during the time that miracles lasted, that is to say, for three centuries at least. But he is pleased to ask, a little lower in the same page, "Why must the fathers of the three or six first centuries have been men of true piety and knowledge, rather than those of the tenth or eleventh?" But why does he insert, or fix, except it be to blend and confound what should be kept distinct, and to put a fallacy upon the reader? Let the question be asked about the three first centuries, and we can assign many and good reasons why they must have been, in the general, better men than those of the tenth or eleventh. Or if the reasons should not satisfy, we appeal to testimony, to certain fact, which supercedes all reasons. As to the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, they might decline in proportion, and did so, though there were some excellent men in all: which however I have no need to consider.

A little

^a Prefatory Discourse, p. 26, 27.

A little after, he falls again to softening, and now he asks, "Must the fathers have been liable to no failings, no passions, no errors, no ignorance at all?" But was that the question? Why all this shifting and shuffling, if a man were not conscious of a bad cause, and of his acting an unhandsome part? The fathers of the three first centuries (that golden age of christianity, tried and purified in the fire of persecution) though not exempt from failings, nor infallible, were yet men of a higher character than those of the tenth or eleventh; and were not bad masters, nor very poor guides, but the contrary: that is what we say, and what we abide by. He goes on to tell us, that he does "not pretend to say," that they were all "a pack of profligate wretches." No; God forbid. I know not whether Celsus, Porphyry, or Julian would have said such a thing, in the greatest extremity of their rage. They had some regard to truth, and to public report and to their own characters'. But though he does not say that, what will he at length say? "There were" some "among them who were," in some measure, "men of piety and knowledge". How hard

' Prefatory Disc. p. 28.

* Ibid. p. 28.

' "The heathens themselves, even such as were the greatest enemies of the christian religion, could not forbear often to do justice to their great knowledge, and eminent sanctity." So says F. Baltus in answer to Fontenelle. Continuation, &c. p. 97. And he instances in Porphyry, and the heathen philosophers of his time. He mentions Libanus also, and Longinianus, and Maximus Madaurensis.

" Ibid. p. 28.

hard to extort the slightest compliment upon those great and good men! Though he can be lavish enough elsewhere towards Confucius a pagan^v, and towards Hobbes^w, a reputed atheist. He proceeds again to pass a decreetory sentence upon the fathers, in the same detracting way; that "Their virtues were, for the generality, far from being any way considerable, and their knowledge commonly false and confused^x:" and he appears to be much offended with those who would bring him back to the primitive food of husks and acorns^y. Yet the illustrious Grotius was plentifully fed with those husks, or else he had never been Grotius. And he had a very great esteem and value for them: which, as it appears in all his works, so more particularly in that admirable treatise of his, his System of Morality. He understood the valuable use of them to that very science, has intimated it over and over in express words^z, and exemplified it quite through that excellent performance. I am aware that Mons. Barbeyrac in his edition of Grotius, and in his French version, has notes of correction upon those passages of his author, and condemns even his master Grotius now, as well as the fathers before. But Grotius was a wise man, and knew what he said; besides that the thing speaks itself. I may add,

^v Pref. Disc. f. xv. p. 44.

^w Ibid. f. xxix. p. 80.

^x Ibid. p. 33.

^y Ibid. p. 35.

^z Grotius de Jur. B. et P. Proleg. n. li. p. 32, 33. Ed. 1720. Conf. L. i. C. 2. f. 9. p. 60.

add, that this gentleman himself, who has profited so much by Grotius and Pufendorf, (who profited by the fathers) has been in some measure obliged to the fathers, though it were only at second or third hand. But the first hand is undoubtedly the best^a. And if any man would expect ever to come up to Grotius, it must be, not merely by reading Grotius, but by reading as he read, and doing as he did^b.

The conclusion which the author makes, is suitable to the rest, and runs thus: "Notwithstanding that great inaccuracy of the fathers,

^a "Constant reading of the most perfect modern books, which does not go jointly on with the ancients in their turns, will, by bringing the ancients into disuse, cause the learning of the men of the next generation to sink; by reason, that they, not drawing from those springs from whence those excellent moderns drew, whom they only propose to follow, nor taking those measures which these men took, must for want of that foundation which their modern guides first carefully laid, fail in no long compass of time." Wotton's Reflections, &c. Pref. p. 3.

^b The learned Buddeus, a judicious and moderate man, and not prejudiced on the side of the fathers, does justice to them and to Grotius, both at once, in these remarkable words: "Sæpius igitur antiquissimis etiam ecclesiæ doctoribus, de juris naturalis capitibus, haud perfunctoriè sermo instituitur Basilium Magnum, Gregorium Nazianzenum, ipsumque Chrysostomum, non tantum græcæ, sed universæ quacunque patet, ecclesiæ summum decus evolvat, legat, scrutetur, cui dubium forte ambiguumque id quod asseritur, videtur. Hos ingenio acri, judicio singulari, juris hujus quæstiones, quoties eas attingerent (attigerunt autem sæpius) expedivisse constat. Ut ipse Hugo Grotius, restaurator hujus philosophiæ felicissimus, tum demum et Pondus et Robur, et lucem insignem, se assertis suis conciliare posse, si præsulum horum auctoritate sententiam suam muniret, fuerit opinatus." Budd. Histor. Juris naturalis, p. 16.

“ fathers, which has often caused them to com-
 “ mit considerable errors; notwithstanding that
 “ fancy they had for vain subtleties, which
 “ made them neglect things of greater import-
 “ ance: notwithstanding all this, I say, the
 “ fundamental doctrines of religion and mora-
 “ lity have still been preserved amongst chris-
 “ tians, even in the most dismal ages of dark-
 “ ness and vice^c.” Now, though here he is
 pleased to attribute no more (in respect of fun-
 damentals) to the best and purest times, than
 to the most dismal ages of darkness and vice
 (as before he had been pleased to compare the
 tenth and eleventh with the three first) yet one
 might have expected to find, that he had
 agreed however with those first ages in all those
 fundamentals, and have acknowledged his ob-
 ligations to them for their care and zeal in
 handing them down to us. But he refers us,
 for explication of fundamentals, to a noted
 treatise of Le Clerc’s, at the end of Grotius de
 Veritate Religionis Christianæ. A. D. 1709. A
 treatise so indefinite and loose, that one scarce
 knows what it aims at; except it be, that
 nothing should pass for a fundamental which
 has been ever disputed by men calling them-
 selves christians, and professing scripture, how-
 ever interpreted, to be their rule^d. Which
 is

^c Prefatory discourse, p. 34.

^d See that treatise of Le Clerc’s briefly examined by Bud-
 deus, in his *Miscellanea Sacra*, Par. I. p. 320.

Compare Turretin. de Articulis Fundamentalibus, p. 13. Frid.
 Spanh. T. iii. 1331.

is judging of important truths, not by the word of God soberly understood, nor by catholic tradition, nor by the reason of things, but by the floating humours and fancies of men; as if all christian doctrines were to be expunged out of the list of necessities, which have had the misfortune to be disputed amongst us, and a short creed were to be made out of the remainder. But what if others, with Baron Herbert of Cherbury, or with the author of the fundamental constitutions of Carolina, building upon the same principles of latitude, and willing to compound all differences, should advise us to admit nothing for a fundamental, but what all mankind have hitherto agreed in, and for the future shall agree in, atheists only excepted; where will then at length these presumptuous schemes end? Or when will weak men leave off dictating to an all knowing God, preferring their own fond devices to the wisdom of heaven?

To be short, that treatise of Le Clerc's, while wholly intent upon discharging unnecessaries (as he supposed them) takes no due care to preserve the vitals of christianity; but is much such another cure for our religious ferments, as bleeding a man to death would be for a fever. I presume, one principal view was, to throw out the doctrine of the Trinity; (though it might lead a great deal farther) and it was that consideration chiefly, which induced him, and many others,

others, to vilify the ancient fathers of the christian church^e. But I proceed.

Mr. B. besides his ill will towards the fathers, appears to discover something of an unfriendly disposition towards ecclesiastics at large, in more particulars than one. But he is particularly offended with the public sermons, as seeming to him not very instructive on the head of morality^f. His translator here sensible of the indecency of the reflection, endeavours to excuse and soften it by a note; suggesting that he might intend it only against sermons and books in French, not against the compositions of the English or Dutch. It was kindly offered. But I find not that the author himself has any where made the exception, or insinuated that he intended any. However, admitting that he had a view to the French only, yet the reflection can hardly be acquitted of some degree of immodesty. For, surely, the French protestant divines have deserved a better treatment. He quotes
Placette

^e *Serio hæc mecum penſitanti, vix ulla commodior occurrit ratio, quam quod ſancti Patres Catholicæ Fidei, Nicænorumque dogmatum teſtes ſint inconcuſſi, vindices acerrimi: qui fidem ab apoſtoliſ traditam, a majoribus acceptam, ad nos uſque propagâunt, acceptam, vitâ, voce, etiam et ſanguine ſuo confirmârunt, invictiſque argumentis contra omnia hæreticorum molimina ſartam teſtam conſervârunt; quique nullis ſophiſmatibus ſecti queant, ut in unitariorum cauſam teſtimonium dicant. Hinc illæ lachrymæ! Hæc fundi calamitas. Adeo ut de antiquitate eccleſiaſticâ dici poteſt quod de ratione alicubi habet Malmsburienſis philoſophus: ubicunque ratio homini repugnat, hominem ipſi rationi repugnaturum. Cave, Epif. Apologet. p. 17. Conf. p. 23.*

^f *Prefatory Diſc. ſ. xi. p. 35.*

Placette and Ostervald to give some colour to his invective. But neither of them will bear him out in any such general aspersions upon their whole body. For what if divines ordinarily, (as civilians also) fall short of Grotius and Pufendorf; or what if they do not follow the same laboured method (any more than the sermon on the mount did) yet their discourses may be very instructive, and the more so for their artless simplicity, being better adapted to the capacities of common hearers. There are many instructive ways of inculcating moral precepts: and it is by no means serving morality, to disparage all others for the sake of one which a man chuses to be fond of, perhaps as thinking it his own. It is natural enough for any person to applaud his own taste, and to prefer his own way. But still it must be acknowledged, that there is more of human infirmity, than there is of equity or justice in it. Ancients ought to have their due praises, as well as moderns; and divines as well as civilians. And it is not fair dealing to monopolize esteem, or to affect to draw all into one channel, where a man has placed himself to receive it, disregarding his neighbour.

It is very true, what this gentleman says, that it was not any of the ecclesiastics, or professors of divinity^s, who drew up that vast system of morality which Grotius is so justly famed for. It was a work proper for so large
a genius,

a genius, and so accomplished a civilian and statesman. Ecclesiastics, I am confident, are so far from envying him the great honour, which he thereby acquired, without seeking it, that they would be heartily glad if every other writer of his profession were like him, and equal to him, in learning, candor, capacity, gravity, sincerity. This gentleman does not make a just report, when he says, that “The ecclesiastics, “instead of returning thanks to Grotius, for “his excellent work, every where declared “against him, and that many even protestant “divines laboured to cry it down^a.” He should have been content to say, that the romanists condemned it^b, while the protestants in general, divines and others, justly esteemed it, and the reformed universities paid suitable regards to it^c. It was not a divine but a civilian^d, who first appeared against it. And why may I not add, that divines at this day, probably, have a greater esteem of the work, and a truer value for it, than the last civilian who translated it, and who has animadverted sometimes too freely upon it. Who
is

^a Prefatory Disc. p. 36.

^b Nec quisquam quam diu vixit Grotius, contra eos (Grotii Libros) quicquam movere ausus est, nisi quod tertio ab eo tempore quo prodierunt anno, 1627, die quarto Februarii, ab Inquisitionis quod Romæ est officio, nota hæreseos inureretur.

Buddei Histor. Jur. Naturalis, p. 31, 32.

Conf. Bayle Diction. in Grotius. Note O.

^c Crescere tum in dies existimatio de utilitatibus librorum Grotii; ut in academiis viri docti eosdem prælegere et interpretari consultum ducerent. Buddeus ibid. p. 39. Conf. Bayle in Note O.

^d Johannes a Felden, A. D. 1653.

is it that has told the world, that the incomparable Grotius was “not thoroughly acquainted” with the art of thinking justly? Is it not this very gentleman^e detracting from Grotius, to compliment the author of the Parrhasiana, who had said the same thing before^f. It was Grotius’s misfortune, it seems, to fall half a century short, in the art of just thinking. But what pains will not some men take to draw reputation to their own apartments. First, disparaging ancients in comparison of moderns, to bring it so much nearer towards themselves; next, excluding divines at large, to fix it among critics, or civilians; then highly extolling two or three very eminent personages, to beat off rivals, and as it were to devolve all repute upon them for a season; lastly, giving broad intimations, that there are yet greater men than those, as to true reasoning, (a prime excellency) and the perfection of just thinking. And who should these at length be, but the same that sit as judges upon them, as upon all the rest? Various are the windings and turnings of self love, and its illusions many. But I forbear. These reflections, if not capable of the strictest proof, yet have most undoubtedly greater appearances of truth^g, than most of those unworthy aspersions cast upon the primitive fathers.

After

^e Prefatory Discourse, p. 79.

^f Le Clerc’s Parrhasiana. p. 247, 248. Engl. edit.

^g Qui ita omnia reprehendunt, et inveteratæ existimationis auctores tam lubenter explodunt, plerumque id agunt ut soli habeantur laude digni: vel certe ad suum judicium, quasi ab erroribus

After all, we take not upon us, to acquit the fathers of all kinds of mistakes or of human frailties; for we very well know that they were men, though excellent men. All we desire is, that no errors may be imputed more than belong to them, nor that those which they really gave into, be aggravated beyond reason; nor that that wherein any of them singly offended, be collectively thrown upon them all. In short, we desire no favour in their behalf, but truth, justice, equity, candor, and humanity, which are due to all men, living or dead; and much more to persons of such exemplary virtues, and so exalted a character in the churches of Christ^b. I shall only add, that had the fathers, several of them, really fallen into as many errors of doctrine, as some would make us believe they did, yet our two main positions would stand firm as before: viz. 1. That from the writings of the fathers, taken with other collateral evidences, we may competently learn as to matter of factⁱ, what was the general sense of the three first

erroribus humanis immune, omnia aliena volunt conformata; quod arrogantiae est haud vulgaris. Perizonius, Q. Curt. vindicat. p. 192.

^b Recte igitur nostri docent, æquitatis legem postulare, ut quos propter multa præclare dicta non æquamus scripturæ, eosdem propter nævos et errores nonnullos protinus non rejiciamus. Circumtulerunt et ipsi carnem et sanguinem; fassi sunt, se humanæ infirmitati obnoxios. Perhumane igitur tractandi sunt, non protervè fugillandi. Rivet. Traçtat. de Patr. Autoritat. C. x. p. 65.

ⁱ A proper distinction should be made (as I before hinted) between the reasonings of the fathers and their testimonies as

first centuries, in the important articles of faith^k. 2. That the historical knowledge of the fact so testified, may be of very great use to us, for the interpreting of scripture, so far as concerns those articles, and for guarding the word of God against any novel and dangerous misconstructions.

VI. It has been sometimes objected, that the fathers were but very indifferent critics upon scripture, and that they frequently misinterpreted particular texts. A learned writer has been at the pains to draw up a moderate octavo, full of supposed examples of that kind, beginning with Genesis, and descending regularly through the scripture, almost as far as the Revelations^l. He had a wide field to range in, four or five whole centuries, and more. And if any thing amiss, by way of comment, happened to drop from any father, in all that time, perhaps in some very hasty composition, some extempore homily, or the like, that must be brought in to swell the account. And whatsoever any one singly has
offended

to fact. Of which see Dodwell. *Dissert. in Iren.* i. f. xliii. p. 77, &c. Bishop Smalbroke *Vindicat. of Miracles*, &c. Vol. i. p. 123.

^k Nihil dubii esse possit, quin per duo saltem aut tria ab apostolis secula, ecclesia in primitivo suo vigore, atque, ut ita loquar, virginitate permanerit: eodem nimirum statu quo ab ipsis apostolis relicta fuit; nisi quod novæ subinde hæreses istis etiam diebus erumperent, quibus ecclesia exercitata fuit, minime corrupta: haud magis scilicet quam ecclesia apostolica ab istis hæresibus depravata fuit quæ apostolis adhuc superstitionibus emergebant; vix citius enim exortæ sunt quam ab ecclesiâ rejectæ. Bevereg. *Cod. Can. vindic. in Proœm.* f. vii.

^l Whitty, *Dissert. de Script. Interpret.*

offended in a single place (somewhere else perhaps making us amends for it) he is to bear the odium of it; and not only he, but all his predecessors, and successors for so many centuries, all that pass under the name of fathers. For the design is to shew, that the fathers in general were very weak men. It would be tedious to enter into a detail of the texts, said to be misinterpreted. Therefore I shall only observe, as follows, upon the examination I have made. 1. That some of the interpretations found fault with, are true and just interpretations, blamed without reason, and brought in only for shew. 2. Several others are doubtful, and many claim candid allowances. 3. Some are misreported, or represented otherwise than the good fathers intended. 4. Most of the blameable ones are of the allegorical kind. And they very often are not so properly interpretations (for the fathers generally admitted a literal interpretation besides, of the same texts) as a kind of moral or spiritual uses or improvements raised upon the texts, for the practical edification of the people. The design seems to have been much the same (only employed upon a nobler subject) with what several pious persons have attempted, in endeavouring to turn every common incident of life, every thing they hear, read, or see to some spiritual improvement, by apposite reflections or meditations. The reader may find a specimen of such spiritual exercises as I speak of in the

very pious and ingenious Mr. Boyle, in his treatise intituled, "Occasional Reflections upon several Subjects." Such a kind of exercise I take many of those allegorical comments (those especially of the tropological kind) to have been. They were well meant, and had their use, though often carried too far; but, in strictness, they were not interpretations of scripture, but rather pious meditations upon scripture. I am sensible that some of them were intended as interpretations. But, in the general, and for the most part, I conceive, they were rather what I have said.

5. But supposing that the fathers sometimes, or often mistook in their interpretations of scripture (in such texts more especially upon which no fundamental doctrine of the church depended, nor perhaps was concerned in) what can be supposed to follow from such a concession? Nothing, so far as I can yet apprehend, that will at all affect our present question. It may be allowed, and cannot indeed justly be denied, that modern critics and divines, of the first rank, having the light of the fathers before them, and greater skill in the languages, and many additional helps which the fathers wanted, are better textuaries, upon the whole^m, than the ablest of the ancients were, or than all the fathers

^m Eruditionem patribus, aut sagacitatem in sequelis colligendis, potiore nullam asserimus quam cœvis aliis eorundum temporum scriptoribus: sed nec potiore illis antiquis in universum, quam junioribus nostris. Quin bonas literas studiosius excultas a nuperis nostris ecclesiæ reformatoribus libenter agnoscimus: nec in philosophiâ modo, sed in antiquitate, in ipsis etiam

fathers together, because they contain them, in a manner, or the best things in them, with additional improvements. But admitting all this, it concludes nothing against the use or value of the ancients, but supposes it all the time. Besides, the stress is not laid upon any critical acumen of the fathers in interpreting every particular text, but upon their faithfulness in relating what was the doctrine of the church, as to the prime things, in their times, or before, and upon their interpretation of some remarkable and leading texts (such for instance, as John i. 1.) upon which chiefly the fundamental doctrines were conceived to rest. From whence it is manifest, that the learned collector of erroneous comments (supposing his representations just, which they often are not) has shot wide of the mark. And indeed he was sensible of itⁿ; however notwithstanding he thought fit to publish his collection. He acknowledges our meaning

etiam linguis illorum temporum vernaculis. Sed et pressiorem nostris et solidiorem argumentandi methodum agnoscimus quam sit alia illa laxior, et sophistica, et declamatoria, quæ non apud Patres duntaxat, sed et alios eorundem temporum scriptores erat receptissima. Itaque, exceptis illis quæ ad fidem pertinent, aut quæ ad propriorum temporum historiam; in aliis facile ferimus dissentientes, judicantesque de eorum ratiociniis juniores. Sed vero in coævis scriptoribus intelligunt coævi etiam idiotæ, quæ lateant remotiorum seculorum etiam eruditissimos. Dodwell, Dissert. in Iren. in Prefat. f. 15.

ⁿ Nec hoc in animam induxisse hos patrum antistites existimo (quod eorum verba præ se ferunt) nempe sacras scripturas interpretandas esse juxta sensum quem Patres de iis speciatim, verbisque conceptis exhibuerunt, quemque nos in hoc opere protulimus; sed tantum eas interpretandas esse juxta doctrinam

ing to be no more than this, that scripture be interpreted by the general doctrine of the ancient church, in the prime things^p. But then he runs on to call it imposing a sense upon scripture, instead of taking one from it; making the fathers speak for Christ, instead of permitting Christ to speak for himself, and the like. Now indeed, if every man that should undertake to interpret scripture out of his own head, were infallibly certain to make Christ speak for himself, and were in no manner of danger of imposing a sense upon him, there would be some weight in such reasoning. But did Socinus, did Arius, did Sabellius, did Valentinus, or an hundred more, succeed so well in that way, that that should be recommended as the only safe way of delivering the mind of Christ? It is granted on all hands, that scripture should speak its own sense, and that no foreign sense ought to be imposed upon it. But then one of the best rules we can think of to secure to it its own sense,

quam existimant apud primævos patres obtinuisse. Quod quidem non est sensum scripturæ ex verbis scripturæ accipere, sed sensum patrum scripturis adferre, &c. Whitby, Dissert. Præf. p. 19.

^p This matter is very clearly and accurately expressed by Mr. Thorndike.

Est enim magnopere advertendum, cum definiendam ex traditione ecclesiæ scripturæ sententiam dico, non hoc me velle quasi teneri possit sensus scripturæ traditione (quis enim putet scripturarum scientiam, omni literarum genere constantem, traditione teneri posse?) sed quod recusandum sit, tanquam a vero scripturæ sensu alienum, quicquid in traditionem incurrit: quod est dicere, intra fines traditionis continendam esse interpretationem scripturæ. Thorndike de ration. Fin. contr.

p. 147.

Compare Sherlock, Socin. contr. p. 78.

sense, and to exclude all foreign senses, is to keep to the old sense (while the words will bear it, much more if they require it) which obtained from the beginning, among the churches favoured in a very particular manner by the illustrious presence of the spirit of God^a.

VII. It has been sometimes objected, that there have been fathers against fathers, councils against councils, and warm contests amongst the ancient doctors themselves; particularly about the time for observing Easter, and about heretical baptisms. All which we allow, but further plead, that the more they differed in rituals, or matters of discipline (things of slighter concern) the more regard is to be paid to them in the greater matters wherein they all agreed. For if they would not suffer any innovation, or the appearance of any, even in the smaller matters, but were exceeding jealous of every thing that looked new, and were prepared to oppose any person
or

^a The very judicious and learned Ger. Vossius speaks excellently well on this head.

Ante omnia quidem scrutandum, quid Deus dicat in verbo suo. Sed ne perperam illud interpretemur, quando omnes ad errorem sumus proclives, attendere etiam debemus, non modo quid unus et alter, sed omnino quid constanter docuerit ecclesia Dei. Quantopere enim repugnat perspicuitati scripturæ, si ita exarata credantur, ut ab apostolorum excessu, ne in præcipuis quidem fidei capitibus, ipsi eas ecclesiarum doctissimi ceperint antistites! Quantum item adversatur bonitati Dei et amoris erga nos, si per tot secula, ad scripturarum intelligentiam defuisse statuamus Spiritum Dei, viris licet pietate et sanctimoniâ præcellentibus, ecclesiæque semper commendatissimis, atque eo melioribus quo apostolicis propiores erant temporibus. Voss. in Epist. ad Forbes. præfix. Histor. Instruēt. A. D. 1645.

or persons, how considerable soever in station, age, or dignity, rather than admit a novelty; how can we imagine that they should all so unanimously agree in the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, if it were not old doctrine, the faith which was once delivered unto the saints? Their differences in inferior matters to strengthen the plea drawn from their unanimity in this, and so are an argument on our side, rather than any objection against us^r.

VIII. It has been objected^s, that our sixth article condemns the method of interpreting scripture by antiquity, or, at least, supercedes it; because it says: HOLY SCRIPTURE CONTAINETH ALL THINGS NECESSARY TO SALVATION; SO THAT WHATSOEVER IS NOT READ THEREIN, NOR MAY BE PROVED THEREBY, IS NOT TO BE REQUIRED OF ANY MAN, THAT IT SHOULD BE BELIEVED AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH, OR NECESSARY TO SALVATION. The article says nothing but what is perfectly right, and perfectly consistent with all we have been pleading

^r Daillé himself argues in like manner, as we heredo.

“ As for those differences in opinion which are sometimes found amongst them, touching some certain points of religion, some whereof we have formerly set down; these things are so far from taking off any thing from the weight of their testimonies, as that on the contrary, they add rather very much to the same. For this must acquit their consenting, of all suspicion that some persons might have, that it proceeded from some combination, or some correspondence and mutual intelligence.” Daillé, *Use of the Fathers*, Part ii. C. 6. p. 186. Conf. Bevereg. Cod. Can. Vindicat. in Procem. f. 5.

^s Whitby, Dissert. p. 4.

pleading for. We allow no doctrine as necessary, which stands only on fathers, or on tradition, oral or written. We admit none for such, but what is contained in scripture, and proved by scripture, rightly interpreted. And we know of no way more safe in necessities, to preserve the right interpretation, than to take the ancients along with us^t. We think it a good method to secure our rule of faith against impostures of all kinds; whether of enthusiasm, or false criticism, or conceited reason, or oral tradition, or the assuming dictates of an infallible chair. If we thus preserve the true sense of scripture, and upon that sense build our faith, we then build upon scripture only; for the sense of scripture is scripture^u. Suppose a man were to
 prove

^t So the great Casaubon, speaking both of himself and for the church of England; and at the same time for Melancthon, and Calvin also.

Opto cum Melancthone et ecclesiâ Anglicanâ, per canalem antiquitatis deduci ad nos dogmata fidei, e fonte sacræ scripturæ derivata. Alioquin quis futuris est novandi finis? — Etsi omnis mea voluptas est et sola, versari in lectione sacræ scripturæ, nullam tamen inde me hausisse propriam sententiam nullam habere, neque unquam *οὐδὲ θεῶν εἰπεῖν*, esse habiturum. Magni Calvini hæc olim fuit mens, cum scriberet præfationem suam in commentarium epistolæ ad Romanos; non debere nos *ἐν τοῖς νεωτέροις*, a consensu ecclesiæ recedere. A. D. 1611. Casaub. Epist. 744. Dan. Heinsio, p. 434. Edit. 3^{ta} Rotterdami.

^u “ We reverently receive the unanimous tradition or doctrine of the church in all ages, which determines the meaning of the holy scripture, and makes it more clear and unquestionable in any point of faith, wherein we can find it hath declared its sense. For, we look upon this tradition as nothing else but the scripture unfolded: not a new thing which is not in the scripture, but the scripture explained and made more evident.” Dr. (afterward Bishop) Patrick’s Discourse about Tradition, p. 18. Printed A. D. 1683.

prove his legal title to an estate; he appeals to the laws: the true sense and meaning of the laws must be proved by the best rules of interpretation; but, after all, it is the law that gives the title, and that only. In like manner, after using all proper means to come at the sense of scripture (which is scripture) it is that, and that only which we ground our faith upon, and prove our faith by. We alledge not fathers as grounds, or principles, or foundations of our faith, but as witnesses, and as interpreters, and faithful conveyers.

That the church of England has a very particular regard to antiquity, may sufficiently appear from a canon set forth in the same year, when our articles were first perfected and authorized by act of parliament, namely, in the year 1571. By that canon it is provided, “ That
 “ preachers shall not presume to deliver any
 “ thing from the pulpit, as of moment, to be
 “ religiously observed and believed by the people, but that which is agreeable to the doctrine
 “ of the old and new Testament, and collected
 “ out of the same doctrine by the catholic
 “ fathers and the bishops of the ancient church.”
 A wise regulation, formed with exquisite judgment, and worded with the exactest caution.
 The

Imprimis vero videbunt [concionatores] ne quid unquam doceant pro concione, quod a populo religiose teneri et credi velint, nisi quod consentaneum sit doctrinæ veteris aut novi testamenti, quodque ex illâ ipsâ doctrinâ catholici patres et veteres episcopi collegerint. Sparrow Collect. p. 237.

The canon does not order, that they shall teach whatever had been taught by fathers; no, that would have been setting up a new rule of faith: neither does it say, that they shall teach whatsoever the fathers had collected from scripture; no, that would have been making them infallible interpreters, or infallible reasoners. The doctrine must be found first in scripture. Only to be the more secure that we have found it there, the fathers are to be called in, to be as it were constant checks upon the presumption or wantonness of private interpretation. But then again, as to private interpretation, there is liberty enough allowed to it. Preachers are not forbidden to interpret this or that text, or hundreds of texts, differently from what the fathers have done; provided still they keep within the analogy of faith, and presume not to raise any new doctrine. Neither are they altogether restrained from teaching any thing new, provided it be offered as opinion only, or an inferior truth, and not pressed as necessary upon the people. For it was thought, that there could be no necessary article of faith or doctrine now drawn from scripture, but what the ancients had drawn out before, from the scripture. To say otherwise, would imply that the ancients had failed universally in necessities, which is morally absurd.

From this account it may appear, that the church of England is exactly in the same sentiments which I have been pleading for.

And

And indeed, if there be any church now in the world, which truly reverences antiquity, and pays a proper regard to it, it is this church^w. The romanists talk of antiquity, while we observe and follow it. For, with them, both scripture and fathers are, as to the sense, under the correction and control of the present church*. With us, the present church says nothing, but under the direction of scripture and antiquity taken together, one as the rule, and the other as the

^w Ecclesia Anglicana hoc se universo orbi characterē dignoscendum, hoc æquæ posteritati æstimandum proponit, quod in controversiis fidei aut praxeos decernendis, illud firmum ratumque semper habuerit (et huic basi reformationem Britannicam niti voluerit) ut scripturis primæ, dein primorum sæculorum episcopis, martyribus, scriptoribus ecclesiasticis secundæ deferrentur. Hammond contr. Blondell. in prælim. C. xiv. f. 13.

Rex cum ecclesiâ Anglicanâ pronuntiat, eam demum se doctrinam pro verâ simul et necessariâ ad salutem agnoscere, quæ e fonte sacræ scripturæ manans, per consensum veteris ecclesiæ, ceu per canalem, ad hæc tempora fuerit derivata. Casaubon Epist. ad Perron. 838. p. 493. A. D. 1612.

Quod si me conjectura non fallit, totius reformationis pars integerrima est in Angliâ, ubi cum studio veritatis, viget studium antiquitatis. Idem ad Salmas. Epist. 837. p. 489. A. D. 1612.

* Vid. Rivet. Traët. de Patr. Authoritate, C. vii. p. 40, &c. Patrick on Tradition, p. 41. Stillingfleet's rational account, Part i. C. 5. p. 80, &c.

N. B. In the 14th article of the creed of Pope Pius IV. the words run thus. "I do receive the holy scriptures in the same sense that holy mother church doth, and always hath—neither will I receive and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the fathers." Here are two contradictory things blended together, the sense of their present church, and the unanimous consent of fathers: which are no more to be reconciled, than light and darkness; except it be by making antiquity as much a Lesbian rule, as they make the scripture. I follow the copy of that creed given in Latin and English at the end of Dr. Hickes's Letters, published A. D. 1705.

the pattern or interpreter. Among them, it is the present church that speaks pretending scripture and fathers: with us, scripture and fathers really speak by the church. I have before thrown in some testimonies of the high regard which our church pays to antiquity. And if the reader desires more of like kind, he may please to consult such as have collected them, some of which I refer to at the bottom of the page^r.

IX. It may still be objected, that the appealing to antiquity may be both fruitless, and endless, and can never decide differences, or silence disputes, because all parties almost have or may put in their claim to it; and as it will be hard to decide among the several claimants, so the whole will terminate in confusion^z: therefore the shortest and best method is, to throw off antiquity, and to abide by scripture alone. This objection does, in some measure, fall

^r Scrivener. adv. Dallæum. Par. i. C. 9. p. 57, &c.

Dr. Puller's Moderation of the Church of England, p. 80. &c.

Bull. Apolog. pro Harmon. f. 1. p. 634.

Grabe, Spicileg. Vol. I. in Præfatione.

Saywell, Præfat. Apologet. præfix. Launoii. Epist. A. D. 1689.

"It is a calumny, to affirm that the church of England rejects all tradition. And I hope, none of her children are so ignorant, as when they hear that word, to imagine they must rise up and oppose it. No, the scripture itself is a tradition; and we admit all other traditions which are subordinate and agreeable to that; together with all those things which can be proved to be apostolical, by the general testimony of the church in all ages." Patrick on Tradition, p. 48.

^z Whitby, Dissertat. Præfat. p. 28, 75, 80.

fall in with others before mentioned. But because it contains, in a manner, the sum and substance of several, I shall return a distinct answer to it, in so many particulars.

1. I would observe, that since all parties almost have put in their claim to antiquity, it is a certain sign that they have a value and esteem for it, and think it of some force. They appeal to scripture also, because it is of weight. One has a plea from it, and another a pretence. Whatever is worth the having where it is to be had, will be also thought worth the counterfeit-ing, where it is not: therefore, we may expect, in such cases, counterfeit scripture and counterfeit antiquity, to give colour to false claims, as well as genuine scripture and genuine antiquity, to support true ones. All this shews that it is commonly thought a great advantage to have antiquity on one side, and as great a disadvantage to any cause, to want it. Men would never contend about it, were it worthless, or insignificant. They would not take pains to adulterate the coin, if the coin itself were not valuable. Therefore let us not too hastily part with any thing, which all parties^a either openly speak well of, or secretly covet and admire^b.

2. As

^a Vid. Hoornbeck. Socin. Confut. T. I. C. vi. p. 86, &c.

^b It is remarkable of Socinus who contemned tradition and all the ancients, undertaking to coin a new religion from scripture alone; I say, it is remarkable of him, that when he found that his disciples would not submit to worship Christ, after all he could bring from scripture to persuade them to it, he re-
minded

2: As to deciding differences; or silencing disputes, it is granted that antiquity will not always be effectual, neither will scripture; neither indeed will any thing but what would be effectual to make all men humble and modest, wise and good. That so many several sects and parties differ so widely from each other, and from the truth, is not generally owing to this, that their different interpretations of scripture have led them into different opinions in religion, but their different opinions have led them into different interpretations. All must of necessity pretend colour, at least, from scripture, (if they would not be taken for madmen, or infidels) and if true interpretation will not answer the purpose, false must come up of course. So, it is in vain to cast about for any rules of interpretation, as certain remedies for the healing differences, or ending all disputes. The disease lies deeper, and is too stubborn for human means. There is no infallible preservative, no irresistible expedient against heresy, any more than against any other vices. Neither ought there to be any; for then a right belief would be no matter of choice, nor faith any longer a virtue, as God designed it should be. We pretend not therefore to infallible

minded them of the ancient and universal practice of saints and martyrs, as an argument to prove that such was the sense of scripture. *Quia nimis aperte in sanctis literis ea illi tribui animadvertunt, &c.* [Ad Matt. Radec. Epist. 3. p. 391.] An argument which, if he had uniformly attended to it, ought to have given some check to his most exorbitant wantonness, and self sufficiency in other matters.

fallible cures by any means whatever. But though we cannot expect to work miracles by the help of antiquity and scripture together, (for heresies there will be notwithstanding, and scripture itself intimates there must be¹) yet they are both of them of very great use, and may have their effect, in a human way, among reasonable men; which is sufficient. We are very sensible, that they who study to pervert scripture, will pervert tradition too, and will often turn those weapons against the truth, which were intended only for defence of it. That is an inconvenience common to a thousand other cases besides this. We must be content to bear with it, and to conduct as prudently as we can, under direction from the word of God. And when we have so done all that is proper, or required, and without effect, the appeal must lie to the common reason of mankind; and there it must rest till the cause comes to be heard before a higher tribunal.

3. But though scripture and antiquity may both of them be resisted, or both perverted, and are not certainly effectual, nor intended to be so, yet both together are of greater force than scripture singly can be; and that is reason sufficient for superadding antiquity. Two witnesses are better than one, though one be superior; and two proofs of the same thing (though one be as primary, and the other secondary) amount to more than either of them singly can do. Every additional light contributes

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

tributes some lustre, and every accessional weight helps to turn the scale. A man may be able to evade scripture alone, who may not be able to evade both scripture and antiquity; or if he can evade both, yet perhaps not so easily. Therefore, if the taking in antiquity is of service, as it reinforces truth, and bears the harder upon error^b, it is worth the urging, for the same reason as all kinds of arguments, or dissuatives against sin and wickedness, are to be urged in due place.

4. Lastly, I must observe, that there is no such great difficulty, as some persons may fancy, in distinguishing false claims from true, or in pointing out among the several claimants, where the right lies. Men of ready wit and invention may draw up a catalogue of innumerable difficulties, taking in all such as might possibly happen in any case, and throwing them together, so as to make up one large and floating idea of difficulty, for the reader to apply to every case. But if one looks a little closer into any particular instance, he will be surprized to find how easy it is, after all, to form a judgment of it, and that not a hundred part perhaps of that general confuse idea of difficulty does really belong to it. If a man were inclined to hear what fine harangues might

^b Quis vero non fateatur, præscriptione ejusmodi multum firmari animos nostros in genuinâ scripturæ interpretatione, validius quoque munitiusque hæreses refelli? Quare hoc armorum genere semper pugnatum fuit a sanctis patribus: qui præcipue quidem se tuentur scripturæ auctoritate, nec tamen prætereunt primorum temporum consensum. Gerard. Voss. Epist. ad Forbes.

might be made upon the uncertainty of the reports of sense, how often and how many several ways, his eyes or ears, or other senses might deceive him, (which may be illustrated with great variety of instances from history, embellished with all the ornaments of wit and fancy) he might be apt, for some time, almost to mistrust his senses, and to take life itself for a dream. But notwithstanding all, when he comes to consider use and experience, he will soon find, that his senses may, for the most part, be securely trusted to, without danger of deception, and that it is scarce once in a thousand trials, that they lead him into error. The like may be said, with regard to the studied harangues drawn up by some writers, about the uncertainty of all tradition, and the obscurity of the fathers, and the danger of deception. They amount only to loose, general discourse, which may seem, at first, to have something in it^e, but is soon confuted by use and experience, the safest criterion to judge by. The truth of what I say, may best appear by an induction of particulars; and therefore I shall next briefly run over the most observable pretences to tradition, ancient and modern (such as at present occur to me) that we may judge from the particular instances how that case stands.

Basilides,

^e Legi libros de abusu patrum, et quidem sapiens: sed nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior, cum posui libros, et mecum ipse de nervis argumentorum cœpi cogitare, assensio omnis illa elabatur. Zornius, p. 665.

Basilides, of the first or second century, and his partizans, pleaded antiquity, and put in their claim to tradition, deriving it by one Glaucias, from St. Peter himself^d. But the vanity and folly of the plea was apparent at first sight. And no sensible man could ever think it at all reasonable to give credit to a wandering tale, or to that obscure Glaucias, rather than to certain fact, (appearing in scripture, and in the churches founded by St. Peter) that St. Peter's doctrine was quite another thing from what Basilides had fathered upon him.

Valentinus, of the second century, and his disciples, pleaded antiquity also, as well as scripture, and fetched their doctrine by one Theodades, as they said, from the apostle Paul^e. A likely matter! that Theodades, whoever he was, should know more of St. Paul's mind, than all the churches founded by that blessed apostle. The silliness of such a plea betrayed itself at once; and but to name it, was to expose it.

The Marcionites, along with the Basilidians and Valentinians, pretended also to derive their common doctrines down by tradition from the apostle Matthias^f. But their plea was mere artifice and pretence, and was effectually confuted by the standing doctrine of all the apostolical churches. By their common doctrines,
I mean

^d Clemens Alexandrin. Strom. vii. p. 898. Ed. Oxon.

^e Clem. Alex. *ibid*.

^f Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. p. 900. Conf. Dodwell, Dissert. in Iren. i. p. 48.

I mean such as they all agreed in, as about the origin of evil, and the denial of Christ's real humanity, or the like.

The artemonians, of the third century, pretended tradition for their heresy, from the apostles themselves, and by the apostolical churches^g. Which was saying something, had they been able to make out the fact. But the falsity of the report was palpable, and a child might see it. For they had contrived their story so oddly, and brought it down so low, that besides ancient records in great numbers, there might be thousands of living witnesses, who could contradict it, and expose it as a shameful imposture.

The arians, after them, in the fourth century, claimed tradition, equally with the catholics, but not with equal reason. They pretended to derive their doctrine down by the fathers that lived before them; particularly, by Origen, and Theognostus, and Dionysius Alexandrinus. But Athanasius easily detected the iniquity of their claim, and effectually confuted it^h.

The macedonians also, in their turn, pleaded tradition for their rejecting the divinity of the Holy Ghost. But the great St. Basil laid open the falsity of their pretences that way, and demonstrated that tradition was on the contrary sideⁱ. Afterwards, (A. D. 383.) when both they
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^g Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. v. C. 28.

^h Athanas. de Decret. Synod. Nic. p. 230, &c. de Sententia Dionysii, 243, &c.

ⁱ Basil de Spiritu Sancto.

and the arians were solemnly called upon, and asked if they would admit the common suffrage of the ancients, and be concluded by it; they shrunk, and would not stand the test, chusing rather to rest the issue of the cause upon logical disputation^k, their usual refuge, and which they thought their safest retreat. It seldom happens, but that those who make false pretences to antiquity, do by their own conduct, (by their evading, or shifting when pressed, or some other as significant marks) betray their own cause; insomuch that a slanderer by, of ordinary sagacity, may often, without entering into the heart of the dispute, give a shrewd conjecture how the case stands. Having considered some of the most noted instances of unjustifiable claims among the ancients, let us next descend to modern, for farther illustration of what we are upon.

The romanists are great pretenders to catholic tradition, or primitive antiquity. And yet the fact is so full and plain against them, that we can point out to them in every age, when, and where, and how every corruption almost commenced, and every innovation crept in^l; or can prove at least, that it was not from the

^k Socrat. Eccles. Histor. L. v, C. 10.

Sozom. E. Hist. L. vii. C. 12.

See my second Defence, Pref. p. 13, &c.

^l See more particularly Bishop Bull's Answer to the Bishop of Meaux; and Bishop Stillingfleet's Council of Trent examined and disproved by catholic tradition: A. D. 1688. Dr. Whitby's Treatise of Tradition, A. D. 1688. Payne on the sixth note of the church, A. D. 1687.

the beginning. And it gives ground for suspicion, that they are themselves conscious of the nullity of their claim, when they decline fair disputation. They screen themselves under modern infallibility, and take sanctuary commonly in their own authority, as sole judges of every thing, rather than rest the issue of the cause upon a strict and fair enquiry into ancient fact. I may further add, that it can scarce be thought a very difficult matter, to discern how antiquity stands, as to that controversy, when a single writer of our own (our excellent Bishop Jewel) was not afraid, though a very modest man, to challenge them publicly upon a great many articles, twenty-seven in number, and to give them six whole centuries to look out in, only to produce any one sufficient sentence out of any old catholic doctor or father, or general council, that should be found to declare clearly and plainly on their side, in any of the said articles. He made the challenge, and upon trial was sufficient to stand his ground^m. The like challenges, with respect to the first three or four centuries, have been offered by othersⁿ, and may be easily maintained by any man of competent learning,

or

^m *Fidem fecerint vel folius Magnæ Britanniae vestrae, vel etiam nostrae, tot theologi summi: ante omnes κειμήλιον illud hominis, Joannes Juellus, Antistes Sarisburiensis. Quis enim e conciliis vel doctoribus, quotquot primis fuere annis sexcentis, non animosius modo, sed doctius quoque, vel felicius impugnavit adversarios? Non defuere quidem quibus hoc disputandi genus minus probaretur, sed præstantissimi etiam Whitakeri judicio, Timidiores hi fuere quam necesse erat. Ger. Voss. ad Forbes.*

ⁿ See Dr. Hicks's Letters to a popish Priest, p. 188, 189.

or judgment. So little difficulty is there in tracing tradition, or in distinguishing pretence from reality. Wherefore one can scarce forbear lamenting, that so able a writer as Daille should spend the pains he did to depreciate the use and value of the fathers, only for fear the romanists should take advantage of them°. He wanted at that time either the spirit, or the penetration of Jewel. Otherwise he might have considered, that the protestant cause could not desire any fairer or greater advantage, than to join issue upon the point of genuine antiquity, and to be concluded by it. Indeed, it seems, that he did perceive it afterwards, and made very good use of it, when years and experience had more enlarged his views^p.

The modern socinians, though their way has been for the most part, to reject antiquity, or to undervalue it, (finding it run against them) have yet many of them, and of late more especially, thought it policy to set up a claim to tradition, deducing it from the apostles, by the ebionites and nazaræans (whom they ignorantly, or artfully confound) down as far as to the days of Justin Martyr, where they are pleased to imagine a break in the descent, making him the first innovator. The story is better laid, than that of their predecessors the artemonians, before mentioned. For they confine us within fifty years from the apostolical

° See his epistle dedicatory prefixed to his *Right Use of the Fathers*. As also, his Preface to the same.

^p Vid. Scrivener in *Præfat.* Zornius, p. 666.

lical age; and they know that we have but few records, within that compass, to confute their tale by. However, by laying all our evidences together, and making the best of them, means have been found to demonstrate^q, so far as a matter of fact, can be demonstrated, the falsity and nullity of their pretended tradition. And indeed, it must look very odd, at first sight, to every considering man, that a tradition from the apostles should be brought down by ebionites, men condemned by all the apostolical churches; nay, and by the apostles themselves, as may appear from what I have offered above.

There remain now only the modern arians to be spoken to. Some of whom do with great assurance lay claim to ancient tradition; while others fluctuate and hesitate upon it, as upon a point which they neither know how to abide by, nor how to give up. As to those who put on the greatest assurance, it is a strong presumption of their consciousness of something wrong, that they are unwilling to acquiesce in the canonical scriptures, without superadding another gospel to them, a new book of constitutions, spurious and interpolated pieces of the third, fourth and fifth centuries^r: which, whatever else they be, are undoubtedly no part of the oracles of God. Another circumstance, which looks suspicious, is, that
this

^q Bull Primitiva et Apostolica Traditio, per tot. Mosheim Vindic. Antiq. cont. Joan. Toland. Stillingfleet Vindic. of the Trin. C, 3. p. 15, &c.

^r See Mr. Turner on the Apostolical Constitutions. Printed A. D. 1715.

this pretended tradition is confined within two centuries. The reason is, because the evidences afterwards come in too full and strong to be eluded. Besides that Clemens of Alexandria, and Tertullian, who are both within the compass, but happen to speak too broad and clear, are excluded from giving their testimony^a. And yet, after all, even those which are taken in, as Justin, Irenæus, Athenagoras, &c. furnish out evidence enough to confute the ill contrived claim, and to prove it a figment.

As to other more prudent and cautious abettors of the same cause, though they decline not testimonies from the ancients, when any can be made to look favourable to that side, yet they endeavour, more ways than one, to sink the value of antiquity, and to lessen the just esteem which we ought to have for it. The testimonies of the ancients are depreciated under the low name of bare illustrations^b, because they are not proofs in the highest sense, as the scriptures themselves are. But there is a medium between proofs in that strongest sense, and mere illustrations. For subordinate proofs of the church's doctrine from the beginning, drawn from church writers, are proofs of something (though not foundations of our faith) proofs in the moral kind, second only to scripture^c, and such as ought
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^a Whiston, *Primitive Christianity revived*, Vol. iv. p. 2.
Compare Grabe's *Instances of Defects*, &c. p. 8, &c.

^b Clarke's *Script. Doctr. Introduct.* p. 24. third edit.

^c See my first *Defence*, p. 453.

Second *Defence*, p. 487, &c. alias p. 492, &c.

See also above, p. 379.

at least to have a negative, so far as concerns fundamentals, in the interpretation of scripture.

Another instance of the low esteem which those gentlemen have of the fathers, is seen in this, that while they quote passages from them, such as they can most easily warp to their own hypothesis, yet they undertake not, so far as I have observed, to reconcile the other numerous passages, or to make the fathers, upon the whole, consistent evidences on their side, as we do ours. This, I say, is another presumptive argument that they are themselves, in some measure, conscious how precarious and unsupported their claims to antiquity are.

I may add, that some amongst them have taken all possible pains to expose the fathers to the utmost*, on purpose to render their suffrage, in this cause, useless and insignificant. A plain sign that they take them not for friends, since they do not use them like friends. From this single mark, a man of ordinary discernment may competently judge (without looking farther) whom the fathers belong to, as Solomon, by a like direction, knew whose was the child.

Enough hath been said to shew, that it is no such very difficult matter, as some would represent, to judge between the claimants, or to distinguish the rightful possessor from the false challenger.

* Dr. Whitby's Dissertation, [de Scripturar. Interpret.] is intirely on this subject, and written with that view.

challenger. I believe, it is, at least, as easy (generally speaking) as it is to judge in a critical way upon texts. For that is what the plainest texts imaginable must at length be brought to^y, if one has a subtle adversary to deal with, who has learned to play the whole game. Much learning commonly will be spent on both sides, before the clearest cause can be brought to a full hearing, and argued quite through. I need but instance in the rounds which Artemonius has led us, upon John i. i. mentioned above.

X. There is one objection more, which though sufficiently obviated already, may yet perhaps deserve to have something more distinctly said to it in this place. It is pleaded, that men ought to judge for themselves, to make use of their own understandings, and to admit no human authorities. I allow the plea. But, I presume, it is not hereby meant,* that we should receive no human explications of texts; for then we must receive none at all. If I interpret scripture for myself, my explication is human to me: or else, how it should become human to others who may may take it of me, I do not see. No doubt but Socinus's, or Crellius's, or Enjedine's explications were human, as it is certain that many of them were false. And therefore they that talk
in

^y Le Clerc very well observes, that, "to men governed by their passions, and conceited of their prejudices, the most evident things in the world are obscure; and that there is no law so clear, but a wrangler may raise a thousand difficulties about it." Le Clerc. Causes of Incredulity, p. 172.

in the general against all human explications, seem not to consider what they say, or they forget themselves to be men.

As to authority, in a strict and proper sense, I do not know that the fathers have any over us. They are all dead men. Therefore we urge not their authority, but their testimony, their suffrage, their judgment, as carrying great force of reason with it; and reason we should all submit to². Taking them in here, as lights or helps, is doing what is reasonable, and using our own understanding in the best manner, and to the best purposes. It is judging rightly for ourselves. If it were not so, what prudent man would advise it, or endeavour to persuade others to it? But, says an objector, do not you follow the fathers? Yes, as far as reason requires, and no farther; therefore this is following our own reason. And he that deserts the fathers in this instance, deserts himself

² “ Reason is that faculty, whereby a man must judge of every thing: nor can a man believe any thing except he have some reason for it; whether that reason be a deduction from the light of nature, or a branch of divine revelation in the oracles of holy scripture, or the general interpretation of genuine antiquity, or the proposal of our own church consentaneous thereto, or lastly, the result of some, or all of these; for he that will rightly make use of his reason, must take all that is reasonable into consideration. And it is admirable to consider how the same conclusions do naturally flow from all these several principles: and what, in the faithful use of the faculties that God hath given, men have believed for true, doth excellently agree with that revelation that God hath exhibited in the scripture; and the doctrine of the ancient church with them both.” *New Sect of Latitude men, in the Phoenix, Vol. ii. p. 706. written A. D. 1662.*

self and his own reason. Their sentiments, so ancient, so universal, carry the force of an argument^a along with them, and a very strong argument too, all things considered^b. Therefore the being conducted by those sentiments, along with scripture, is the same thing with being convinced or persuaded by argument; which is hearkening to right reason, which is submitting to God (who gave us reason for our guide) and not to human authority. It is following the safest and best light which divine providence has graciously afforded us. For, as a great and good prelate has observed, "The general tradition of the church, " next to scripture, is the best and surest confir-
" mation

^a " It is a good argument for us to follow such an opinion, " because it is made sacred by the authority of councils and " ecclesiastical tradition. And sometimes it is the best reason " we have in a question; and then it is to be strictly followed. " But there may be also at other times a reason greater than it, " that speaks against it; and then the authority must not carry " it. But then the difference is not between reason and autho- " rity, but between this reason and that; which is greater. " For authority is a very good reason, and is to prevail, unless " a stronger comes and disarms it, and then it must give place. " So that in this question, by reason I do not mean a distinct " topic, but a transcendent that runs through all topics." Taylor's Liberty of Prophecy, Sect. x. p. 220.

^b " Since we know what the catholic faith was, and how " the catholic fathers expounded scripture, if the words of " scripture will naturally and easily admit that sense (much " more if they will not admit any other sense, without great " force and violence) let any man judge which is most safe and " reasonable, to expound scripture as the catholic faith and " catholic fathers expound it, and as scripture most easily and " naturally expounds itself, or to force new senses and old " heresies upon scripture, which the catholic church has always " rejected and condemned." Sherlock. Present State of Soc. Controv. p. 80.

“ mation of this great point now in question
 “ between us; and that which gives us the
 “ greatest and truest light for the right un-
 “ derstanding of the true sense and meaning
 “ of scripture, not only in this, but in most
 “ other important doctrines of the christian re-
 “ ligion^c.”

What I have said appears sufficient to shew that the taking the ancients in, for the assisting or informing our judgments in this question, is judging for ourselves in the most rational way that can be thought on. Nevertheless, I take the liberty to observe, that those who talk most of mens using their own understandings, often mean little by it, but to get the direction of their faith and consciences to themselves, or to make them change a reasonable veneration of the ancients, for a blind admiration of some modern preceptors. They very well know, that the generality of mankind, (such as read little, and think less) will scarce judge for themselves at all, except it be as to the choice of some leader, or leaders, whom they may suppose it safest to confide in. And it is among such as these, commonly that new teachers seek proselytes; obtruding themselves as guides, and at the same time assuring them that they need no guides. Which, in effect, is leading them about what way soever they please, artfully telling them that they go by themselves, when in truth,

^c Archbishop Tillotson's Vol. i. Sermon. xlv. p. 456. fol. edit.

truth, they only change their leaders. To say all at once, the true and the whole meaning of the incredible pains which some persons have taken to set the fathers aside, has been generally neither more nor less than this; to remove as much of the evidence which stands against them, as they can with any decency attempt to remove. They cannot, they dare not pretend to throw off scripture itself, unless they were resolved to throw up christianity with it, and to declare openly for infidelity. But there may be colours invented for throwing off the fathers; and therefore thus far they can proceed, in opposing the ancient faith, and at the same time save appearances. There lies the whole of this matter, as I conceive, generally speaking. Otherwise, it is manifestly against all sense and reason to make the least question either of the use, or the value of ecclesiastical antiquity.

The sum of what I have been endeavouring through this whole chapter, is, that scripture and antiquity, (under the conduct of right reason) are what we ought to abide by, for the settling points of doctrine. I have not put the case of scripture and antiquity interfering, or clashing with each other: because it is a case which never will appear in points of importance, such as that is which we are now upon. However, as to the general case, we may say, that those two ought always to go together, and to coincide with each other, and when they do so, they stand the firmer in their united strength. But if ever they clash, or appear to clash, then undoubtedly there is

an error somewhere, like as when two accountants vary in casting up the main sum. In such a case, a wise man will not rest satisfied (if the thing be of moment) till he finds out, if possible, the reason of the difference, and discovers where the error lies. For, either it must lie on the scripture side (when a man takes that for scripture which is not scripture, or that for true interpretation which is not true interpretation) or it must lie on the tradition side, through some misreport made of the ancients, or some mistake of the ancients themselves. Then the question will be, which of the two suppositions is most likely to be true in that instance. And the resolution at length must turn upon a due weighing and considering all circumstances, with the reasons offered here and there, and then ballancing the whole account.

C H A P. VIII.

Shewing, that what has been lately offered in favour of the arian interpretation of John i. 1, 2. and of Heb. i. is of no force or validity.

THE author of “Sober and charitable Disquisition,” had been pleased to say, “That an honest mind, inquisitive after truth, and willing to weigh the matter impartially, and to examine the evidence on both sides thoroughly, might be long in suspense before he could determine to his full satisfaction: and that several men of equal sense, learning, capacity, probity, and piety, may after such examination make different determinations upon the matter^a.” He refers to his appendix for proof, which appendix contains two opposite views of John i. 1. and of Hebr. i. I would here previously remark something of his manner of wording the thing, and then proceed. Might it not as well have been said, that there is as much reason on one side of the question, as there is on the other? Why should an invidious turn be given to what we are doing, that if we maintain our point, and insist upon it as true and just, it shall be interpreted to be as much as saying, that our adversaries have not equal sense, learning, &c. with ourselves? We design not, we desire not to make any such

^a Sober and charitable, &c. p. 42, 43.

such comparisons. We leave persons out of the question, desiring only to come to the truth of things. It is natural for many to admire the founders of their sect, or the leading advocates of their party^b. And it might look like rudeness, to say a word reflecting on their sense, learning, capacity, or probity. Neither indeed is there any occasion for detracting from their general character, since it is certain that men of as great sense, learning, and piety, to all outward appearances, as any in their times, have sometimes fallen into heresy^c, (as they might into any other great sin) and have perverted the gospel of Christ: *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*. It is a wrong way to judge of faith by the men^d, rather than of the men by their faith, and conduct. There is no sense however in going against truth, no learning in contradicting the wisdom of heaven, no piety nor probity in departing from God. Persons must be tried by the rule, and not the rule by their

^b Magnus profecto nescio quis signatur magister, et tantæ scientiæ qui sectatoribus propriis non solum quæ humana sunt nosse, verum etiam quæ supra hominem sunt prænoscere posse videatur; quales fere discipuli sui jactitant fuisse Valentinum, Donatum, Photinum, Apollinarem, cæterosque ejusmodi. Vincent. Lirinens. C. 15.

^c See Addenda, p. 514.

^d Solent quidem isti infirmiores etiam de quibusdam personis ab hæresi captis ædificari in ruinam; quare ille vel ille fidelissimus et usitatissimus in ecclesiâ, in illam partem transferunt? Quis, hoc dicens, non ipse sibi respondet, neque prudentes, neque fideles, neque usitatos æstimandos, quos hæreses potuerint demutare. Tertull. Præscript. C. iii.

their character, be it otherwise ever so high or commendable^d. Men may behave unworthy of themselves: and God permits even wise men, and good men (as Solomon and David) sometimes to fall, when they grow secure or assuming; for a punishment to them, and for a trial to others^e, and for a warning to all, that they may learn to be humble, and watchful, and not to trust so much to their own worth, or parts, as to their care and circumspection, and God's blessing upon it.

Thus much being premised for the taking off all undue admiration of any man's person, and for the preventing any invidious comparisons, (foreign and useless to the point in hand) as well as for the putting the cause upon a right issue; I now proceed to examine the merits of the debate between the arians and the athanasians, so far as concerns John i. 1. and Hebr. i. 10.

I. The

^d Quid ergo si episcopus, si diaconus, si vidua, si virgo, si doctor, si etiam martyr lapsus a regulâ fuerit, ideo hæreses veritatem videbuntur obtinere? ex personis probamus fidem, an ex fide personas? Nemo sapiens est nisi fidelis, nemo major nisi christianus; nemo autem Christianus, nisi qui ad finem perseveraverit. Tertul. Præscript. C. 3.

^e Luce clarius aperta causa est, cur interdum divina providentia quosdam ecclesiarum magistros nova quædam dogmata prædicare patiatur: *ut tentet vos*, inquit, *Dominus Deus vester*. Deut. xiii. 3. Et profecto magna tentatio est, cum ille quem tu prophetam, quem prophetarum discipulum, quem doctorem, et adfertorem veritatis putes, quem summâ veneratione et amore complexus sis, is subito latenter noxios subinducat errores; quos nec cito deprehendere valeas, dum antiqui magisterii ducis præjudicio; nec facile damnare fas ducas, dum magistri veteris præpediris affectu. Vincent. Lirin. C. 15.

I. The author of "Sober and charitable Disquisition" undertook to represent the athanasian and arian constructions of John i. 1. fairly and impartially, as indeed common equity and justice required. He begins with the athanasian. But how soon does he discover marks of partiality, and unequal dealing? He smooths over the arian construction with all affectionate tenderness, covering even its real and greatest faults, as we shall see presently. But does he shew any favour at all to the other? When he is interpreting for us, THE WORD WAS GOD, he presently throws in, "The selfsame being with the Father[§]." He must have known how ambiguous, and equivocal^h that expression of selfsame being is, and that in one sense of it, it is not our doctrine, but the sabellian heresy. Might it not therefore have sufficed to have said, the "same God with the Father, or one God with the Father?" That is a doctrine, which we inviolably maintain and adhere to, because scripture forbids us to admit two adorable Gods. As to the question about calling them the selfsame being, it is a question about a name, or a phrase, and a scholastic question, invented several ages after our doctrine had stood secure, and independent of it. And when the schoolmen undertook to consider this verbal affair (for it is no more) they either rejected, or admitted the expression, with proper distinctions;

§ Sober and charitable Disquisition, p. 51.

^h See my first Defence, p. 167, 328.

tions; not scrupling to say “tres res,” or “tria entia relativa,” always meaning that the union was too close to admit of the name of beings in the pluralⁱ, without a softening epithet: and therefore being of being, or substance of substance (not beings, or substances) has been the catholic language^k. Let but those who object sameness of being, define the terms, and tell us what constitutes sameness, and then it will be very easy to tell them how far we suppose the three persons to be the same being. All the difficulties about sameness, or individual, or numerical, &c. resolve only into this, that we know not precisely, in all cases, what to call same, individual, numerical, and the like. The general notion of the Trinity is clear, but the meaning of those terms is loose, confuse, and undeterminate. So that the perplexity (if there be any) lies not in the thing, but in some dark names, which many use without any certain meaning. Say but what those words or names precisely signify, and it will be very easy to determine how far they are applicable to the true notion of the Trinity. But to proceed.

I have observed how unfairly the gentleman has dealt with our doctrine. Let us next take notice how tenderly he deals with the arian construction of the same words. *The Word was God*, viz. “a divine person, a most
“godlike

ⁱ See my second Defence, Q. xxiii. p. 452—460. 2^d. edit.

^k See my farther Vindic. p. 21. 54

“godlike being^k.” He should have said, another God, a creature of the great God^l, which is their plain and certain meaning; though they are very reserved and bashful in the wording of that article, as they have always been, dreading to speak it out in broad terms. However, if God the Son be God, as the text plainly says, he must be either another God, or one God with the Father. So that if our doctrine of one God be rejected, two Gods is the consequence directly. Besides, since they must own, and do own, that he was God before the world was made, they should tell us, whether he was God by nature, or by office. He had no office so early, that I know of. It seems then, he was God by nature. So, there are two Gods by nature upon the arian principles. Therefore let any sober christian judge, which is the true interpretation of the text, theirs or ours, thus far. Now let us proceed.

The word WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. That is, say we, before any thing was made. And we say it for these two plain reasons. Because the order of the sentence requires it, since the account of the creation follows after; and because all things were made by the word: therefore he was before all creatures. The arian construction, as this gentleman represents it^m, is, IN THE BEGINNING, *when God created the*

^k Sober and charitable Disquisition, p. 54.

^l See my first and second Defence, Q. V.

^m Ibid. p. 54, 55.

the heaven and the earth. Now, if heaven and earth are words which signify all creatures, we admit the exposition. But if they mean any thing less, they are short of St. John's exposition of his own phrase, which he interprets to mean, all things that ever were made, that is, all creatures.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADEⁿ. Now, we interpret and say, that if all things were made by him, then he himself must be unmade. And since made by him, amounts to declaring him Maker of all creatures (as we shall see upon Hebr. i. 10.) we again conclude, He is no creature; because a creature creator, if at all reconcilable with reason^o, is however utterly irreconcilable with scripture,

ⁿ One may observe the force of this text even upon those that came very unwillingly (and upon the whole not sincerely) into the doctrine it contained, since it obliged Eunomius himself, one of the grosser kind of arians, but the shrewdest man of the sect, to admit thus much, that Christ must be as much superior to his creatures, as the maker must be to the things he has made; and that he was really invested with creative powers by the Father. A remarkable concession, and such as ought to have made a modest man renounce all his metaphysics; which alone hindered him from coming intirely into church principles. The place I speak of, is in his Apologetic (which was answered by St. Basil) and runs as here follows.

Τοσαύτην αὐτῷ νέμομεν ὑπεροχὴν, ὅσην ἔχει ἀναγκαῖον τῶν ἰδίων ποιημάτων τὸν ποιητήν. Πάντα γὰρ δι' αὐτῆς γεγενῆσθαι κατὰ τοῦ μακάριον Ἰωάννην ὁμολογῶμεν, συναπογεννηθείσης ἀνωθεν αὐτῷ τῆς δημιουργικῆς δυνάμεως, ὡς εἶναι θεὸν μονογενῆ πάντων τῶν μετ' αὐτὸν, καὶ δι' αὐτῆς γενομένων. Eunom. Apolog. p. 281. Fabr. Bibl. Græc. L. v. C. 23. Basil. opp. Tom. i. p. 623. Edit. Bened.

Conf. Basil. contr. Eunom. L. ii. p. 255. Edit. Bened.

^o A late ingenious writer argues the point, in a very rational manner

ture, which every where makes creative power the distinguishing character of God most high^p. The arian construction is, *All [other] things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was [then] made.* So, by inserting "other" there, and "then" here; that is, by altering St. John's most express, most emphatical propositions, a new sense is made for him which he had doubly excluded, as far as words could do it. For our construction, we have,

1. Express text.
2. The order and coherence of the sentence.
3. The tenour of scripture, appropriating creative powers to God supreme.
4. The reason of the thing. For it is not reasonable to suppose that one creature should create another.
5. The universal judgment of the first and purest ages of the christian church.

What is there now, on the other hand, to counterbalance these reasons, or to oblige us to run cross to so many evident marks of a true interpretation? The author of "Sober and charitable," &c. pleads on the other side, that

manner, thus: "Creation, or the bringing a thing into being
 " which before had none, or was once nothing, is undoubtedly
 " the proper act of an Almighty or Infinite Power: and, as
 " must be granted, infinite power is an incommunicable attribute or perfection. Besides, if a power of creating could be
 " communicated, then the being on which it is conferred, having the same power, might endue a creature of its own with
 " such a power; and this creature might make another such
 " creature, and so on in infinitum; which is so shocking an
 " absurdity, that no one can bear the thought or imagination
 " of it." Essay concerning rational Notions, p. 159. printed for W. Innys, 1733.

^p See my Sermons, p. 91, &c.

that the apostle, if he had intended to teach that the Logos was God, creator of all things, might have said it more plainly, and with less circumlocution^q. But we think, St. John has done it in chosen and expressive words, and could not have made use of better, to express what he intended, all things considered^r. He might have said, adds this gentleman, that “in God are three personal distinctions, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit.” But St. John was wiser than to teach sabellianism, as it has been since called. The blessed three are not personal distinctions, but distinct persons; as is proved from St. John in this very place, because *the Word was with God*.

It is asked, could either jew or heathen guess that he did not mean a distinct being^s? I answer, neither jew nor heathen, who knew that St. John believed the Old Testament, could be so weak as to imagine that he meant to teach another God, or two Gods. However, the christian church are the properest interpreters of St. John’s meaning. Why must jews, or heathens, as such, be appealed to^t, rather than Christ’s disciples, for the understanding christian doctrine? The objector here twice^u confounds
personal

^q Sober and charitable Disq. p. 55.

^r See the whole explained above.

Compare Tillotson Sermon. xliii. Vol. i. Fol. Ed.

^s Sober and charitable, &c. p. 56.

^t See my Sermons, p. 36—39.

^u Ibid. p. 56, 57.

personal characters (as he had before done personal distinctions) with persons; which is not fair towards our side, nor so prudent for the other side, because it is tacitly confessing, that our notion wants to be misrepresented, in order to afford some colour for disputing against it.

He asks, why is it doubled over, **THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING?** To be the more emphatical against heretics, or the better to connect the sentence, and to introduce what follows.

“And why so minute, as to inform us, not “one is to be excepted^v?” Perhaps to foreclose, condemn, and put to shame all those who, notwithstanding such his minuteness, would yet be bold enough to foist in “other” there, and “then” here, to elude and frustrate his meaning. Experience shews, that all his guards are useful, none superfluous. But if the reader desires a fuller account, he may please to look back to what I have said above^w. I have answered all the questions. And now let the reader judge, whether they have weight enough to bear down the christian interpretation founded upon the reasons before recited. Yet the author is pleased to recommend the other, in very high terms: “not a word is lost,” in that way, “every “thing has a plain, proper and obvious sense^x.” Is it possible? Has the word God, for instance, its

^v Ibid. 57.

^w See above, p. 256. And Sermons, p. 46, 47.

^x Sober and charitable, &c. p. 55.

its plain, proper, and obvious sense¹, when it is made to signify a godlike creature? And is there not a word lost, when the very strongest expressions which the apostle could use, to exempt the Logos from being one of the things made, are defeated and frustrated, by forcing the words "other," and "then," upon him, which he never wrote, and by obtruding a sense, which, it is likely, he abhorred? Have the words, *all things*, and *was not any thing*, their plain and obvious sense assigned them, when they are violently wrested from their absolute meaning to a limited one; and are arbitrarily clogged with reserves and restrictions, though, according to the plain letter, and other plain circumstances, they form universal propositions, affirmative and negative? If such liberties as these are to be taken with plain texts, and without any apparent necessity, it is in vain to prescribe any sober rules of interpretation, or to attempt to prove any thing from dead writings. But if words can be of any weight or significancy, these texts of St. John are plainly definitive on our side of the question: which I have shewn more at large elsewhere². Or if the reader pleases to peruse professor Franck's treatise, lately translated from the German into English³, he

¹ As to the strict sense of the word God, in that place, see my Sermons, p. 35, 36.

² Sermons the first, second and third, at Lady Moyer's Lecture.

³ Franck's Nucleus, or Christ the Sum and Substance of Scripture, p. 93—173.

he will there find the divinity of our blessed Lord solidly demonstrated by six several arguments drawn from this single chapter, but compared with other texts.

I may over and above advance one more argument, fairly deducible from the distress which the impugnors of Christ's divinity have all along been in, with relation to this proeme of St. John, and the difficulties they have lain under in contriving to evade its force. The Alogi^b, (who appear to have been a branch of the ebionites) as also Theodotus^c, took the short and plain way, which was to reject the whole gospel, as not being of St. John's inditing.

The arians were so distressed with the same passages, that they knew not how to evade them but by a new invention of a two fold Logos^d, one considered as an attribute, quality, or operation of God (after the fabellian way) the other considered as a creature, made by the former. And here they were under a dilemma which they could never get clear of. For either all things were made by the Logos in the former sense, and then how was the Logos MADE FLESH? Or all things were made by the Logos in the latter sense, created by a creature, who must also, if the word *all* be strictly taken, have created himself; which is palpably absurd. It seems, that they
inclined

^b Epiphan. Hær. L. i. 3. Philastr. Hær. lx. Damaſcen. Hær. 31.

^c Epiphan. Hær. L. iv. 1.

^d Vid. Athanasii Opp. 260, 282, 398, 409, 413, 503, 505; 620. Edit. Bened.

inclined most to the former: and if we may trust to Anastasius Sinaita, that was the very construction which Arius himself espoused^e.

Next, let us inquire, whether the modern impugnors of Christ's divinity have succeeded any better, or whether they also have not betrayed the like confusion and distress. I need not say any thing of Socinus's wild and extravagant interpretation, which has long been exploded by his own disciples, and which stands now only as a monument of the wonderful virtue of strong prejudices, and self admiration. Zwicker came after, and he took the surer way, which was to deny the authenticity of the proeme, and to strike it out of the canon of the New Testament. Artemonius (aliàs Sam. Crellius) is a later instance, and which comes as fully up to my purpose. He has been moving heaven and earth (as I have before^f intimated) to persuade us into a different reading of one of the critical words in St. John, on which much depends. He has ransacked all antiquity^g for authorities to justify an alteration; and because he could find none, he has made as many

as

^e Arius's interpretation of the place, according to Anastasius in his Hodegus, runs thus:

Καλῶς εἶπεν ὁ Ἰωάννης, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, τῷτ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἔνμα τῷ θεῷ. ὃ γὰρ εἶπεν, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ υἱός, ἀλλ' ὁ λόγος ὁ προφορικὸς τῷ θεῷ. Anastas. Hodeg. p. 330.

^f See above, p. 296.

^g Initium Evangelii S. Joannes ex antiquitate ecclesiasticâ restitutum. Per L. M. Artemonium. A. D. 1726.

as he pleased, by mere dint of wit and fancy. Certainly St. John had some direction extraordinary, or was otherwise a very sagacious person, that, after the utmost improvements made in the art of chicanery, and wire drawing of words, yet nothing can effectually do the business, even at this day, but altering the text; though, after all, there is no manner of countenance from any copies for doing it. One thing however I may observe of Artemonius, which as it shews his acuteness, betrays at the same time a consciousness, or a tacit acknowledgment, that we are in the right to interpret the word God in the strict sense, as we do. He argues, that it was by no means proper that the word should be called God, lest that appellation, taken with so many other plausible circumstances, should lead men into a snare, and make them believe Christ to be *God most High*^h. Now, what is this but confessing, that such an inference is natural and obvious, upon the supposition that Christ is called God in scripture? He saw the force of it, and the inevitable necessity we are under of so interpreting. And that consideration made him take such immense, but fruitless pains, to defeat all those texts where Christ is expressly called God. But if that single consideration struck this gentleman in so sensible a manner, what can we think of all the other texts, which over and above ascribe to Christ divine perfections, and
divine

^h Artemonius, Par. ii. p. 295.

divine worship also? It is plain, that Artemonius could not have been against us, had he not set out at first upon a false principle, that human imagination is the measure of divine truths.

II. From John i. I now pass on to Hebr. i. in order to examine whether what we find there, be not altogether as definitive as the former. Here the author of "Sober and charitable," &c. undertakes to give a fair and impartial account of both parties. Notwithstanding which, in his very first setting out, he represents us as direct and manifest sabellians, against all reason and justice, and common equity. He puts these words upon us, as expressing our sense: "God may be said to make all things by his Son, as a man to understand by his reason¹." This is not our way of speaking, or thinking, on the subject, (it was Sabellius's, it was Arius's) and therefore ought not to be reported as ours. For, what if we do not call Father and Son two substances (the union being too close to admit of such expressions) yet we scruple not to say, substance of substance, like as God of God. We contrive our expressions so as to suit the scripture idea of a real distinction without division, and of an union also without confusion. We maintain, that there may be a real diversity consistent with real unity, and that what is multiple in one respect, may be one in another.

¹ Sober and charitable Disquisition, p. 59:

ther. And thus we stand clear of fabellianism on one hand, so likewise of tritheism on the other^k. The author proceeds to set forth^l a summary of our reasonings upon Hebr. i. And he has indeed brought together a great deal more than can ever be fairly answered. But without replying to what was offered on our side, and without so much as endeavouring to shew how the force of those many strong expressions can be evaded, or the words accounted for, he contents himself barely with representing the pleadings on the other side, producing our antagonists not as respondents, but opponents only. But, supposing that the adversaries had ever so much to urge in that way, yet unless they could reconcile it with the words of the texts, and give a clear account of the whole, it is doing the work by halves, and can, at most, be esteemed but as a lame defence. However, by this means, all our arguments from Hebr. i. are left standing in full force, and it remains only that we remove objections, to clear the whole thing. Two considerations are suggested by this author; first, that the chapter here under enquiry, makes the Son another being from God; secondly, it makes him also an inferior being^m. Let us now examine, how these pretences are supported.

I. As

^k See my Defence, Q. xxii. p. 330, &c. Second Defence, p. 459, &c. 2^d Ed. Farther Vindication, p. 56, 57, 58, 59.

^l Sober and charitable Disquisition, p. 59—65.

^m Ibid. p. 66.

1. As to the first suggestion, it is to be observed, that it amounts only to a metaphysical subtlety about being and person, as if the words were convertible terms; which though it has been tried a thousand times over, could never yet be made out. But here we may perceive, who they are that run into metaphysical and logical niceties, to evade plain words of scriptureⁿ, instead of keeping close to sacred writ, and what it teaches in full and express terms. But I would further remark, though I have occasionally hinted it before, that all this discourse about being and person is foreign, and not pertinent; because if both these terms were thrown out, our doctrine would stand just as before, independent of them, and very intelligible without them. So it stood for above 150 years, before person was heard of in it; and it was later before being was mentioned. Therefore, if all the objection be against those, however innocent, expressions, let the objectors drop the names, and accept the thing. They may express the doctrine thus, if they please; that the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God, and all one God; and yet the Father is not the Son, nor Holy Ghost, nor either of them the Father. This is plainly the doctrine of scripture, let them express it in what terms they please.

ⁿ How common and constant the practice is, I have often observed elsewhere.

Defence, Q. xxii. p. 303, 327, 480.

Second Defence, p. 4, 68, 113, 149, 225, 335, 430, 439, 489, 516, 519, 525. 2^d Edit.

please. Each is Jehovah, and yet they are not three Jehovahs. This is truth, (if scripture can prove a truth) and we need no more. But if any one has a mind to express this doctrine in such words as Justin Martyr, and Athenagoras, and Irenæus, and Theophilus, and Clemens Alexandrinus expressed it in (before person or being was heard of^o) he is at liberty as to words, while he admits the sense. For we are not bound down to names, but to things. These considerations premised, I now proceed with our author.

He objects, that the Son is distinguished from God^p. From God the Father, he means. And so he should be, because God the Son is not God the Father. He adds, if God means God the Father, "He only must be God, for he says "of himself, He is GOD ALONE." Here I might run out into a particular explication of what concerns exclusive terms. But because I have often done it before, I chuse to refer^a. But in the mean while, if the exclusive terms are so strict, how come the arians off with their doctrine of two Gods? We can give a good reason why the exclusive terms should yet tacitly suppose and include what so intimately belongs to God. But certainly all creatures are for ever excluded.

The

^o See my second Defence, p. 449. alias 454.

^p Sober and charitable, &c. p. 66.

^a Sermon iv. per tot. Second Defence, 31, 56, 57, 84, 99. 198, 390. Edit. 2d. alias 26, 51, 52, 79, 94, 193, 385.

Third Defence, or farther Vindication, p. 33.

The author goes on to observe, that Father and Son must be two things^r. One would hope, he does not mean two Gods, equal or unequal. As to any thing else, we are unconcerned; we allow that the Father is not the Son, and so vice versa. He says further, the Son, is "not the self same individual substance^s." Here again the reader may observe, what kind of arguments we are attacked with. No regard had to the proper, obvious, natural sense of the texts, but all the dispute is made to turn upon logical niceties, or metaphysical subtleties about the nature of things confessedly mysterious, or rather upon the meaning of technical terms and names, such as individual^t, &c. It is sufficient again to say, that the Son is not the Father, and yet each is Jehovah, and Jehovah is one. Either deny this to be scripture, or say, that no scripture can prove the point. And then what signifies arguing from John i. or from Hebr. i.? It is all but empty amusement.

It is asked, can a person begotten be the express image of a person unbegotten, when the properties are so unlike^v? That our scripture has so taught^v, is as plain as the sun. Therefore the question should have been put, whether the texts shall be allowed, or shall be struck out of the canon? As to *begotten* and *unbegotten*,

^r Sober and charitable, &c. p. 67.

^s Ibid. p. 68.

^t See my second Defence, Q. ix. 327. 2d. Edit. alias p. 322. Q. xxiii. p. 453. alias 448.

^v Ibid. p. 68.

^v Col. i. 15. Hebr. i. 3.

unbegotten, they are relations only; and (to compare small things with great) Adam unbegotten and Seth begotten were exceedingly alike, and one the express image of the other, notwithstanding. So there must be something more than the circumstance before mentioned, to prove a dissimilitude, or inequality^w. But this way of prying into what is unsearchable, in order to evade plain scripture texts, is not treating the scripture reverently. Neither is there any argument in it, any more than in a blind man's reasoning about the nature of colours. A very acute and judicious writer well says: "'Tis certain we cannot speak of God with too great moderation. It is better to rest satisfied with an imperfect knowledge of him, by being content with general ideas, than to run the hazard of thinking unworthily of that great being, by our rashness in proceeding to determine ideas^x." That is to say, by attempting to determine the *modus*, about which we have properly no ideas; or by turning ideas of pure intellect into ideas of imagination, which is equally absurd. Hitherto we have been considering, whether the Son be another being (by which the author means another God) different from God the Father: which the objector has not proved.

2. We are next to consider whether the Son be inferior, in nature, or perfections, or can be proved to be so from Hebr. i. It is pleaded, that

^w See my Answer to Whitby, p. 14, 15.

^x Croustz, new Art of Thinking, Vol. ii. p. 80. Engl. Edit.

that God *appointed him heir of all things*^y. Therefore (for that must be the consequence, or none) he is an inferior God. Why then is it not said, that they are two Gods? However, to answer more directly, but withal very briefly; the Son's voluntary condescension neither supposes him inferior, nor makes him so.

It is further objected, that since God made the worlds *by him*, the Father only is efficient, and the Son the instrument^z. It must be owned that the arians, formerly^a as well as since, have suggested as much. But it is all fiction and fancy, without support from scripture, confuted in this very chapter, as we shall see presently. There is no foundation in the text for any such unworthy thought of God the Son. The preposition *by* proves nothing of it; for it is frequently made use of in scripture, when the Father himself is the person to whom it is applied^b. But what room is there for further dispute here upon that head, when the text itself expresses the proper efficiency of God the Son, as fully and clearly as it is possible to be expressed? THOU LORD IN THE BEGINNING HAST LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS.

^y Sober and charitable, &c. p. 69.

^z Ibid. p. 69.

^a Vid. Athanas. Orat. i. p. 430. Orat. 2. 498.

^b Basil. de Spir. Sancto, Opp. Tom. iii. C. v. p. 6, &c. Edit. Bened. Taylor's true Script. Doctrine, p. 347.

Alexander's Essay on Irenæus, p. 148.

Franck's Nucleus, p. 118. My Sermons, p. 48.

WORKS OF THINE HANDS^c. This is said of God the Son^d, who is also Jehovah in the Psalm from whence these words are taken. Could there be any words thought on, either plainer, or stronger, to express a proper efficiency than those are? And if those are not sufficient to ground our doctrine upon, what can we think of sacred writ, (with reverence be it spoken) but as of a book overspread with traps and snares, to deceive the christian world? It is true, there are tropes, figures and metaphors in holy scripture, as when Christ is called a door, a vine, a way, and the like; or when God is said to have eyes, hands, mouth, heart, &c. And, in such cases, every sensible man knows, that a literal construction would be absurd. But in the instance now before us, here is no mark at all of any trope, figure, or metaphor, nor any reasonable objection against interpreting up to the letter. So far from it, that the whole tenor of scripture confirms us in it, that Christ is Jehovah, and properly creator. And the worship ascribed to him is another concurring circumstance to compleat the demonstration. In short then, those arian salvos come too late. The text itself has, in express words, precluded them.

The author goes on to object: "Upholding
" all things, but by the word of God's power."

Dr.

^c Hebr. i. 10. compare Psalm cii. 25.

^d See my Defence, p. 95. Sermons, p. 63.

Compare Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. f. 8. p. 319.

Dr. Knight's Sermons, p. 51, &c.

Dr. Clarke interprets it Father's power: which is a possible, not a certain construction. The text may as probably, or more probably be understood of the Son's own power. However, be it Father's or Son's, it is all one power, and he and his Father are one. The author^e adds, "Seating himself not in God's throne, but at his right hand^f." And what then? Is he not a second person? But it seems, that if he had been seated in the same throne, the author would then allow the equality. Turn we therefore to the book of Revelations, and there we find them both in one throne. It is THE THRONE (not thrones) OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB^g. And Christ himself declares that he was in his Father's throne^h.

It is asked, why should angels be called upon, to worship him, if he were God equal to the Father? "Can they be supposed ignorant, if that were the caseⁱ?" To which I reply, that though angels were fully apprized of his high perfection and dignity, yet as to the particular times, places, and circumstances, when, and where, and in what manner, they should pay their homage or devotions, they might wait for special orders. The Father's manifesting his Son to the world, was a new and extraordinary

^e Sober and charitable, &c. p. 69.

^f What the phrase, of sitting at God's right hand, imports, is very judiciously and carefully discussed by Vitringa, Obs. Sacr. L. ii. C. 4, 5.

^g Revel. xxii. 1.

^h Revel. iii. 21. Compare Zechar. vi. 12, 13. and Vitringa, Ibid. C. 5, p. 310.

ⁱ Sober and charitable, &c. p. 70, 71.

extraordinary occasion. And how should the angels know in what manner they were to behave upon it, without particular direction? They were ordered thereupon to repeat or renew their solemn exercises of devotion towards the Son, now become man, and clothed in flesh. As they had also special directions for celebrating his nativity, or incarnation in devout doxologies^k.

It is further pleaded, that the words, GOD, EVEN THY GOD, argue some inferiority of God the Son. Yes, of the Son considered as man^l and in his state of humiliation, in which God the Father *anointed Him with the oil of gladness*, with the unction of the spirit, *above his fellows*; his partners in the same nature^m, partakers of the same flesh and blood; on which account *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*ⁿ.

The author asks, why should not the apostle roundly assert that Christ was Jehovah, if it were his purpose to set him forth as such^o? Had he done it ever so roundly, a contentious adversary might still have found fault, and might have

^k Luke ii. 13, 14. Compare Rev. xii. 11, 12.

^l Ἡ θεότης ἔχεται, ἀλλ' ἡ ἀνθρωπότης· εἶτα παρὰ τῆς μετόχης σαφής. Τίνας δὲ εἰσιν οἱ μέτοχοι, ἀλλ' ἡ οἱ ἀνθρώποι; ταῖς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ ἐκ μέτρων ἔλαβεν ὁ χριστός. Chrysost. in loc. And so other Greek fathers, Basil, Theodoret, Theophylact, Oecumenius.

^m See Dr. Bennet on the Trinity, who explains the text at large, and very justly; excepting that he dislikes the ancient notion of the unction of the spirit, which yet seems to be the true one, p. 31.—35.

ⁿ Hebr. ii. 11.

^o Sober and charitable, &c. p. 73.

have required somewhat further. The apostle has said what is sufficient for the conviction of any reasonable man, by applying what is directed to Jehovah in the Psalm, to God the Son in this chapter. This is saying the thing roundly enough. And we are not obliged to give reasons why he has said no more, if he has said what may suffice with men of ordinary discernment. But I may hint further, that a very probable reason may be assigned why he did not take that precise method which the objector fancies he should have done. It was the apostle's direct design, as it seems, to prove that the Son was above the angels, in opposition, very probably, to the simonians or cerinthians of that time, who attributed the creation of the world to angels, and who looked upon Jesus as a mere man, and as such inferior to angels^a. Therefore the apostle chiefly labours these two points, namely to prove that Christ was really creator^r, and that he is vastly superior to angels. What he further insinuates of his being Jehovah comes in by the by; and it would not have been directly to his purpose, to have insisted more particularly upon it. Because even that would not have proved him (in the opinion of the heretics then prevailing) superior to angels, since they looked upon Jehovah, the God of the Old Testa-
ment

^a Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. f. 8. p. 320.

^r Hebr. i. 2, 10.

ment as no more than angel*. However, though I assign a reason, which appears not improbable for the apostle's saying no more, yet we have a right to insist upon it, that there is no need of assigning any reason at all for his not saying more than was sufficient for every purpose. There is no end of cavils when men are disposed to indulge them. The jews sought after a sign, but had none more given them, after they had had enough. They demanded that Christ should come down from the cross for their satisfaction. But infinite wisdom would not condescend to satisfy them in their way, when they would not submit to other very sufficient and better evidences. The question therefore is not, whether the apostle in this place has said all that could have been said, but whether he has said as much as was needful. We conceive that he has. And let those who think otherwise, consider how they can fairly evade the force of what they here find, before they require more. Let them think how it is possible to elude what St. Paul has here said to prove that Christ is Jehovah, though he has proved it only by the by, and has not largely or directly insisted upon it.

I shall

* Post hunc Cerinthus hæreticus erupit, similia docens. Nam et ipse mundum institutum esse ab illis [angelis] dicit: Christum ex femine Joseph natum proponit, hominem illum tantummodo sine divinitate contendens; ipsam quoque legem ab angelis datam perhibens; Judæorum Deum, non dominum, sed angelum promens. Pseudo Tertull. Præscript. C. xlviii.

Conf. Epiphani. Hær. xxviii. 1.

I shall only add, that if the point is to be decided by the asking of questions in this way, let leave be given to the orthodox also, to ask a few questions in their turn. If Christ be a creature, why is it not roundly asserted, either in Old or New Testament? And if he and the Father be two Gods, supreme and inferior, why is not that also roundly asserted, in some part of scripture at least? We have the more reason to expect it should, because otherwise the contrary doctrine hath so many, and so plausible appearances of truth, that the most serious and conscientious persons are under inevitable danger of deception by them. And therefore, if we may be allowed to reason and argue with the tremendous Deity, upon the subject of his revelations, or dispensations towards mankind, none, we imagine, can with more justice, or with better grace, ask; why, has not scripture, somewhere or other dropped a hint or two about Christ's being a creature, or about his being an inferior God, admitting two Gods, two adorable deities, to prevent our falling into an otherwise unavoidable delusion? I doubt not, if that were the truth, but that our Lord himself (whose humility is so justly celebrated) and his disciples after him, would have openly proclaimed it; and that we should have as plainly found it in the New Testament throughout, as now we find the reverse. Can we imagine that a truth of that moment (if it were a truth) should be left in obscurity, to be drawn out at length, after more
than

than 300 years, by Arius, Aetius, and Eunomius^{*}; and that by the help chiefly of logical conceits, and metaphysical speculations, far above the reach of common capacities? Certainly divine wisdom could not be so much wanting to the bulk of mankind, but would have provided better for them, in a scriptural way; and by plain words, that so they might be more beholden to Christ and his apostles for their faith, than to the dialectics of Aristotle, or Chrysippus's subtleties". But I forbear to press this further: and having briefly run through all that the author of "Sober and charitable Disquisition" had to urge in favour of the arian interpretation, both of John i. and Hebr. i. I must now leave it to the impartial readers to judge, whether any thing has been offered on that side, which can be thought sufficient to counterbalance our plain and direct evidences brought from express words, fixed to a certain meaning by all the approved rules of grammar and^{*}

* Clarissimis scripturæ testimoniis argumentationes metaphysicæ argutiæ opponere, Eunomii est, qui ab Aetio magistro edoctus, essentiam divinam penitus ac perfecte scilicet cognitam sibi habere persuadebat. "Tam perspicue Deum qualis sit novi, ac tantam illius notitiam sum consecutus, ut ne me ipsum quidem melius quam illum noverim." Aetius apud Epiphanium lxxvi. p. 916, 989. Eunomius ipse, majore etiam insolentiâ apud Socratem, iv. 7. "De sui ipsius essentiâ, Deus nihil amplius scit quam nos: nec illa ipsi quidem notior, nobis autem obscurior." Fabric. Bibl. Græc. L. v. C. 23. p. 272. Conf. Basil. contr. Eunom. L. i. p. 224. Teodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. iv. C. 3. Cyrill. Alex. Thesaur. p. 260. Chrysost. Hom. 27. Tom. i. p. 307. Philostorg. L. i. p. 468, 470. Ed. Vales. Gregor. Nazianz. Orat. 34. p. 539.

^u Vid. Basil. contr. Eunom. L. i. p. 214, 221.

and criticism, and confirmed by the universal suffrage of the first and purest ages. Thus far I was obliged to enter into a small part of the other controversy, which affects the truth of the doctrine, rather than the importance; because, as I hinted in the entrance, the author I am concerned with, had mingled them in some sort together. But they who desire fuller satisfaction in that other question, may please to consult those treatises which are professedly written upon it. What comes in here amounts only to slight touches, and so far only as related to the texts mentioned. Which though justly reckoned definitive on our side, are yet but a very slender part of what the whole scripture affords us in that cause.

A D D E N D A.

*Additional Illustrations referring to the
respective Pages above.*

Page 18. *I*DEAS of intellect, &c. The distinction between ideas of intellect and ideas of imagination, is much insisted on by Des Cartes in his metaphysics^a, and is explained more clearly and to better advantage in a late judicious treatise written by Mr. Croufaz in French, and now rendered into English^b.

P. 79 *The same with his eternal existence.* My meaning is, that Episcopius (which is true also of Limborch) did not distinguish in that instance between the eternal generation of the Logos, and the eternal existence; as some of the ancients did^c.

P. 111. *Such effects might last beyond the apostolic age.* I might have expressed myself with greater assurance, and said, that they actually did last

^a Cartesii Meditat. vi. p. 36. Object. v. p. 45. Respons. v. p. 78.

^b Croufaz, new treatise of the Art of Thinking, Vol. i. p. 16, &c.

^c See my Defence, Q. viii. p. 161, 162.

Second Defence, Q. viii. p. 322.

last as far down as to the cyprianic age^d: nay, and if we may believe Paulinus^e, who reports it as an eye witness, they continued down to the latter end of the fourth century. From whence may fairly be accounted for, the long continuance of the phrase of *delivering over to Satan*, in excommunications^f. Indeed, the use of the form remained afterwards, when such miraculous effects had intirely ceased. Because the form had been customary from the beginning; and because it might still be understood in a sense not altogether foreign to its first intention, such as I have expressed above.

P. 126. *He may be in some measure hurt in his reputation by it, and that is all.* I would be understood here of the general case only^g, abstracting from particular cases and circumstances; as of ministers, suppose, whose maintenance also may be accidentally affected by it. An inconvenience common to ecclesiastical offices or civil,
as

^d See Dodwell Dissertat. in Iren. ii. 54. p. 191—194.

^e Quem cum interrogasset [Ambrosius] et deprehendisset autorem tanti flagitii, ait: oportet illum *tradi Satanæ in interitum carnis*, ne talia in posterum audeat admittere: quem eodem momento, cum adhuc sermo esset in ore sacerdotis, spiritus immundus arreptum discerpere cœpit. Quo viso, non minimo timore repleti sumus et admiratione. Paulin. in vit. Ambros. p. 9.

^f See Bishop Hare, Scripture vindicated, p. 69, 70.

^g Denique bono aut æquo non contraria est excommunicationis pœna, quâ nulla mansuetior. Non admovet flagra corporibus, non aptat vincula, non denuntiat mortem, non eripit bona, non abdicat dignitates; indignis abnuat sacramenta quibus in perniciem suam abuterentur. Itaque tota et ad Dei gloriam et ad peccantis salutem est comparata. Sam. Basnag. Annal. Tom. ii. p. 481.

as often as men disable themselves from serving, either by refusing to give the legal securities, or by opposing the public measures.

P. 127. *Or to pay them so much as common civilities.* That is to say, when such civilities were likely to be interpreted as an approbation of the men and of their principles. But see this rule of the apostle considered more at large, under its proper restrictions and limitations, by an 'able hand'^h.

P. 155. *A wicked life the worst heresy, which is scarce sense, &c.* At the best, it is a strong figure, or a turn of wit, and the thought not just upon the whole. But something of it may be traced up as high as to St. Bernard of the twelfth century, who argued that vicious persons were seducers by their bad example, and therefore were a kind of heretics in practice, corrupting more by their ill lives, than heretics, properly so called, could do by their bad doctrinesⁱ. And he applies it particularly to vicious clergymen; not to extenuate the guilt of heresy, but to inhanse the guilt of such bad example. The thought was not much amiss, if he had not carried it too far. He should not have suggested, that bad example is worse than

^h Dr. Berriman's Sermon, in the Appendix to his Boyle's Lectures, Vol. ii. p. 339.

ⁱ Multi sunt catholici prædicando, qui hæretici sunt operando. Quod hæretici faciunt per prava dogmata, hoc faciunt plures hodie per mala exempla. Seducunt scilicet populum et inducunt in errorem; et tanto graviores sunt hæreticis quanto prævalent opera verbis. Bernard. Serm. ad Pastores, p. 1732.

than heresy properly so called. It is true, that bad example commonly will do more harm than sound preaching will do good; because such example runs in with corrupt nature, and the other is contrary; but if the doctrine be on the same side, it will do infinitely more mischief; and one loose casuist will debauch more than a hundred others shall do who are only loose in their lives. Bad example under the check and discountenance of sound doctrine taught by the same person, carries its antidote along with it. But bad doctrine is a very dangerous snare. It is not merely breaking a law, but loosening the authority of all^k. Therefore Bernard strained the thought too far: and so Dean Colet after him^l; who is the first man I have met with, that

^k “ Who will maintain that a prince would do better in
 “ changing the laws according to his present passions, than to
 “ let them subsist, and break them every hour? Nobody. For,
 “ if he observes not the laws as he should, he leaves them
 “ their authority however, with respect to his subjects and such
 “ other princes as are willing to observe them; which is abso-
 “ lutely necessary to society.—If it be asked then, which car-
 “ riage is most dangerous and blameable, that of such as violate
 “ the laws of the gospel which they believe to be divine; or
 “ that of the incredulous who reject the divinity of those
 “ laws, because they have no mind to obey them; it is plain
 “ that the latter is much worse than the former, supposing the
 “ laws of the gospel to be beneficial to society, which cannot
 “ be doubted.” *Le Clerc, Causes of Incredulity*, p. 88, 89.

The case which *Le Clerc* here puts, is not precisely the same with the other, but the reason is the same for both.

^l “ He sheweth plainly, that there be two kinds of heresies,
 “ one arising from perverse teaching, and the other from a
 “ naughty life: of which two this latter is far worse and more
 “ perillous, reigning now in priests.” *Colet’s Sermon before
 the convocation*, A. D. 1511. reprinted in the *Phoenix*, Vol. i.

that ventured formally to say (for Bernard had not expressed the figure so boldly) that a bad life was a heresy, and the worst heresy. However, neither of them intended to extenuate the guilt of heresy at all, but to magnify another kind of guilt as still greater according to their way of reasoning, or rather rhetoricating.

Archbishop Tillotson glances upon the same thought^m, but gives a very different turn to it; and cannot, I think, be reasonably understood of heresy strictly and properly such, but of what some have wrongfully called so. Bishop Taylor, a very moderate man, in a treatise written on the side of liberty, may be a very proper arbitrator, to clear and determine the whole dispute.

“ Men think they have more reason to be
 “ zealous against heresy than against a vice in
 “ manners, because it is infectious and dan-
 “ gerous,

^m Tillotson's Sermons, Vol. i. p. 402. Fol. Edit. His reflection upon those who were too censorious in charging heresy upon others, and at the same time too indulgent to their own vices, runs thus:

“ Deluded people! that do not consider, that the greatest
 “ heresy in the world is a wicked life, because it is so directly
 “ opposite to the whole design of the christian faith and re-
 “ ligion; and that do not consider, that God will sooner for-
 “ give a man a hundred defects of his understanding, than one
 “ fault of his will.”

N. B. Heresy, justly so called, is not a mere defect of understanding, but a fault of the will. And it is more directly opposite to religion than common offences; as overturning the authority of a law is worse than transgressing it; or as mutiny, sedition, and rebellion are worse than common felonies.

“gerous, and the principle of much evil. In-
 “deed, if by heresy we mean that which is
 “against an article of the creed, and breaks
 “part of the covenant between God and man
 “by the mediation of Jesus Christ, I grant
 “it to be a grievous crime, a calling God’s
 “veracity in question, and a destruction also
 “of a good life; because upon the articles of
 “the creed obedience is built, and it lives
 “or dies as the effect does by its proper
 “cause. For, faith is the moral cause of
 “obedience. But then heresy, that is, such as
 “this, is also a vice, and the person cri-
 “minal, and so the sin is to be esteemed in
 “its degrees of malignity. And let men be
 “as zealous against it as they can, and employ
 “the whole arsenal of the spiritual armour against
 “it. Such as this, is worse than adultery or
 “murder: inasmuch as the soul is more noble
 “than the body, and a false doctrine is of
 “greater dissemination and extent than a single
 “act of violence or impurity. Adultery or
 “murder is a duel, but heresy (truly and in-
 “deed such) is an unlawful war, it slays thou-
 “sands. The losing of faith is digging down
 “a foundation. All the superstructure of hope
 “and patience and charity fall with it.—But
 “then concerning those things which men now
 “adays call heresy, they cannot be so formid-
 “able as they are represented. And if we
 “consider that drunkenness is certainly a damna-
 “ble sin, and that there are more drunkards

“ than heretics, and that drunkenness is the
 “ parent of a thousand vices, it may be better
 “ said of this vice than of most of those opi-
 “ nions which we call heresies, it is infectious
 “ and dangerous, and the principle of much
 “ evil, and therefore as fit an object of our
 “ pious zeal to contest against”, &c.” Thus far
 Bishop Taylor.

In the sum of the matter, I entirely agree with him. The result, I think, is, that nominal heresy, or an error in slight matters, not affecting the foundation, not hurting the vitals of christianity, is not so bad as real immorality. And it is equally true, on the other hand, that nominal immorality is not so bad as real error in religion, though in the slighter doctrines. But supposing the error and the maintaining of it to amount to real heresy, it is then a vice, and the greatest of vices. So the whole will turn upon the nature, quality and tendency of what is charged as an heresy. Invincible ignorance will equally excuse any other vice; and so is wide of the purpose.

P. 196. *All parties are for creeds under one shape or other.* It may be asked perhaps, what creed the sceptics are for, who profess to doubt of every thing? I answer, that their pretended scepticism is mostly affectation, and they generally are as credulous as other men; frequently more so. If they believe less of religion, as some of them perhaps may, yet they are easy
 of

^u Taylor's Liberty of Prophecyng, Dedicat. p. 42, 43.

of belief as to any thing else. They have their systems, their maxims, their probabilities (as they are pleased to call them) which make up as long and large creeds as our certainties do. Only there is this difference, that they commonly prefer a creed of paradoxes, and sometimes glaring absurdities, before a rational faith. And while we believe as much as we can prove, and no more (which is believing like wise men) they believe what they have a mind to, proving nothing, by their own confession; which is resolving all into fond persuasion and credulity.

The most considerable writer, I know of, that ever appeared in behalf of general scepticism (matters of faith only excepted) is the celebrated Huetius, in a posthumous treatise^o, written, I suppose, for an exercise of wit, to divert himself and friends; unless he had some further latent view to serve the Romish cause. I may remark, that one article of his sceptical creed is, that the certainty of faith is superior to that of sense. A second is, that it is superior even to that of the first principles and axioms of geometry^p. One cannot desire any two plainer instances of the credulity of a sceptic. I mention not, how often he forgets the part he was to act, talking in the stile of a dogmatist: "Sure it is," or "it is certain^q." Sometimes, he is "fully persuaded,"
or

^o A philosophical treatise concerning the Weakness of human Understanding. Printed in English, London, 1725.

^p Huet. Philosoph. Treatise, &c. p. 15.

^q P. 28, 30, 34, 68, 75, 98, 150.

^r P. 7.

or "fully convinced^s," or "certainly knows^t:" at other times, he speaks of evident proof^u, and irrefragable argument^x, and demonstration^y, just as any dogmatist would do. So hard a thing is it for the finest wit, even to personate a sceptic with any tolerable grace, or without perpetual inconsistency. For which reason I before hinted that I look upon scepticism, so called, to be little else but affectation. Or if there really be any such kind of men who believe that they believe nothing, that very instance is an undeniable argument of their more than common credulity. Indeed for a man to fall to arguing and proving that there is no such thing as proof or argument, is much the same as if one should make an eloquent harangue, lamenting that mortal men have not the faculty of speech, loudly complaining that all mankind are mutes.

P. 198. *Our way supposes that men ought to examine (if capable, and as far as capable) in order to know that the doctrine proposed is true.* If it should be asked, what need of examination after so many wise and good men, and all morally certain? I would ask again, what need is there of studying the demonstrations of Euclid which all the world agree in, as containing certain truth? A man might safely enough take them for granted, and by so doing might as soon become a sound geometrician, as by the like method, in the other case,

^s P. 33.^t P. 14.^u P. 40.^x P. 52.^y P. 99. comp. 100, 104.

case, he might commence a sound divine, or a confirmed christian. At best, it would be resting faith upon mere human authority, which would be resting it on a wrong bottom; and besides, would be neglecting the due improvement of the heart, and cultivation of the mind.

But may there not be danger in examining, danger of being led to dissent from what is right, and to embrace some error? Undoubtedly there may. And what conveniency is there without some inconveniency? Such danger must be risked, rather than found our faith upon a wrong principle, to render it worthless and contemptible. It is better to hazard the chance of falling into some error in faith, than to be certain of committing a greater error in conduct. However, if men come with humility, modesty, and circumspection to the examination, and have patience to stay till they are clear, before they formally dissent, or before they declare it openly; there will be no great danger in examining every thing with the utmost severity. The danger lies in examining by halves.

P. 200. *The phrase of having dominion over ones faith, is of obscure meaning, &c.* I did not then call to mind how well the meaning of that phrase had been lately cleared up by a very learned hand^y.

P. 257. *The darkness cometh not upon it.* I referred to a very judicious critic, Lambert Bos, for

^y Bishop Hare. *Scripture vindicated*, p. 60—63.

for the justifying my rendering of this text. I find since, that the learned Wolfius disapproves of what Bos had offered^z. But I abide by Bos notwithstanding, who plainly has reason on his side. He did not insist merely upon the force of the word καταλαβεῖν, but upon the phrase, upon the verb as joined with σκότος or σκοτία. The examples which he gives from sacred and profane writers, of the use of the phrase, are all clear and full to his purpose. And if there be need of additional examples from ecclesiastical writers, there are several; as Origen^a, Cyril of Alexandria^b, and Theophylact^c. Clemens of Alexandria, in his comment (if it be his) seems to take in both the senses of that verb into his construction of the text^d. As to the allusion to the gnostic principles (I use the word gnostic in the larger sense) which I suppose in the words of St. John, neither Bos nor Wolfius take notice, nor seem to have been aware of it. But
if

^z Ingeniosior quam verior hic est Lamb. Bos interpretatio—quod natura λόγῃ sanctissima et purissima sit, nec minimam cum impuritate habet communionem. Τὸ καταλαμβάνειν itaque per opprimere converti voluit. Quæ notio quamvis in N. T. et apud ipsum Joannem nostrum, Cap. xii. 35. occurrat, ab hoc tamen loco aliena merito censetur, in quo non tam quid tenebræ in Christum molitæ sint, aut moliri potuerint, quam quid Christus in tenebras molitus sit, exponitur. Conf. v. 10, 11.—Itaque rectius notio illa vocis καταλαβεῖν hic tenetur, quæ receptionem aut agnitionem infert. Hanc enim N. T. scriptoribus imprimis familiarem esse patet ex Act. iv. 13. Rom. ix. 30. Wolfii curæ Philolog. et Crit. in loc. Vol. i. p. 784.

^a Origen. Comment. in Joan. Edit. Huet. p. 73, 74.

^b Cyril. Alex. Comment. in Johann. p. 23.

^c Theophylact. in loc. p. 561.

^d Clemens Alex. Excerpt. Theodoti. p. 969. Edit. Ox.

if the observation be just, as it appears very probable (and I shall say more of it presently) that also is a confirmation of such sense of the phrase as Bos pleads for; and the two considerations taken together, answer very aptly to each other, which is an argument that both are right.

P. 258. *The ancient magian notion of a good God and an evil God, the first called light, and the other darkness, &c.* A brief account of that ancient notion may be seen in Dean Prideaux^e, and a large history both of its rise and progress among the pagans, in Wolfius^f. And how the same notion was revived, or augmented with new fooleries, among the heretics of the apostolical times, may be understood from a noted fragment of Basilides, preserved by Archelaus of the third century, in his account of his disputation with Manes^g. Now, considering that Cerinthus

^e Prideaux's Connection, Vol. i. p. 179. 8vo. Edit.

^f Wolfii Manichæismus ante Manichæum, f. ii. p. 48—174.

^g The fragment of Basilides is as follows.

“ Define ab inani et curiosâ varietate; requiramus autem
 “ magis quæ de bonis et malis etiam barbari inquisierunt, et in
 “ quas opiniones de his omnibus pervenerunt. Quidam enim
 “ horum dixerunt, initia omnium duo esse, quibus bona et mala
 “ associaverunt, ipsa dicentes initia et ingenita: id est, in
 “ principiis, lucem fuisse ac tenebras, quæ ex semetipsis erant,
 “ non quæ esse dicebantur. Hæc cum apud semetipsa essent,
 “ propriam unum quodque eorum vitam agebat quam vellet, et
 “ qualis sibi competeret. Omnibus enim amicum est quod est
 “ proprium, et nihil sibi ipsum malum videtur. Postquam au-
 “ tem ad alterutrûm agnitionem uterque pervenit, et tenebræ
 “ contemplatæ sunt lucem, tanquam melioris rei sumpta con-
 “ cupiscentia, infectabantur ea commisceri.” Archel. et Manet.
 Disput.

thus was among those who had adopted the old notion of a good God and an evil God, (as Epiphanius has informed us^h) and so of course must have fallen in with the old magian principles; Basilides may reasonably be allowed of as a good interpreter of Cerinthus in those articles. And since St. John, very manifestly struck at several other tenets of Cerinthus, in his divine proeme, it is more than probable that what he says in verse the 5th about light and darkness, alludes to the gnostic notion then prevailing, and is a confutation of itⁱ. They pretended that the evil God darkness pursued the light, and came up to it. He asserts, that the darkness came not upon it, never laid hold of it, never approached to obstruct or obscure it, but was irradiated and illuminated by it. It may further be considered, that Basilides, probably, flourished in the first century, and might be contemporary with

Disput. p. 194. Fabric. Conf. Wolf. Manich. p. 177. Grab. Spicileg. Vol. ii. p. 39.

^h Epiphan. Hæres. xxviii. 2. p. 111.

ⁱ Accordingly, Archelaus (in his dispute with Manes) confutes that hypothesis from this very text; which is a great confirmation not only of the construction of the phrase before given, but likewise of such application of the text as I have been pleading for. His words are:

“ Quomodo et ipse [malus Deus] cum sit omnino totus tenebræ, Luci supervenit et comprehendit, evangelista testimonium ferente, quia *lucet in tenebris, et tenebræ eam non comprehenderunt?* ”

“ How could it be that the evil God, being that he is all darkness, should come upon the light, and compass it, when the evangelist declares, that the light shined through the darkness, and the darkness compassed it not? ”

with St. John, as both Jerome¹ and Epiphanius² seem to assert. And though learned men have disputed it, yet¹ Massuet appears to have well cleared up the point against the most material objections. Now, if Basilides himself was so early, it is the more likely that St. John, writing at that time, might have an eye to the pernicious doctrine then propagated by him, and by the whole set of gnostics. By gnostics I understand all that sort of men, who derived their principles from Simon Magus, and lived in the apostolic age; though I am aware that in a stricter and more special sense^m, the gnostics may be said to have risen up in the second century.

P. 299. *Irenæus born in or near the apostles' times, and was advanced in years when he wrote.* I here follow Dodwell in a matter which requires not, and indeed admits not of a scrupulous or critical exactness. However, since Dodwell has been blamed by more than one, for his chronology in that article, I may just mention how the different accounts stand in relation to the year when Irenæus was born. According to Dodwell, A. D. 97. Grabe chuses the year 108. Tillemont, the year 120: others, 135. Massuet sets it the latest of all, A. D. 140. According to which different computations, Irenæus must be supposed

¹ Hieronym. cont. Lucifer. p. 304. Opp. Tom. iv. Bened. Edit.

² Epiphan. Hæres. xxxi. 2.

¹ Massuet. Dissertat. præv. in Irenæum, p. 60.

^m See Wolfius. Manichæismus, &c. p. 206.

Budæus Eccles. Apostol. p. 344, 345, 571, &c.

supposed either older or younger when he wrote, if he wrote in 176, or thereabouts, as most agree that he did. Though some differ also as to that, setting the date of his writings 10 or 15 years lower.

P. 438. *In strictness they were not interpretations of scripture, but rather pious meditations upon scripture. I am sensible that some of them were intended as strict interpretations: but in the general, &c.*

To confirm and illustrate what I have here said, it may be observed, that St. Austin took into the allegorical way of interpreting, when he was yet but a new convert, because he thought it much easier than the literal way, which he was not then so well prepared for. He had not at that time (so he tells us himselfⁿ) sufficient leisure or abilities to undertake so hard a province as the unfolding the literal sense, and therefore contented himself with giving only the mystical, or allegorical. Could a sensible man so speak, and at the same time imagine that the mystical

ⁿ Et quia non mihi tunc occurrebant omnia quemadmodum proprie possint accipi, magisque non posse accipi videbantur, aut vix posse, aut difficile; ne retardarer, quid figurate significarent ea quæ ad literam non potui invenire, quantâ valui brevitate et perspicuitate explicavi, ne vel multâ lectione vel disputationis obscuritate deterriti, in manus ea sumere non curarent. Augustin. de Gen. ad Liter. L. viii. C. 2. p. 227. Tom. iii. Bened.

Note, That St. Austin in the year 389, then a new convert, ventured no farther, than the allegorical exposition of Genesis. But in the year 401, he undertook the literal explication also, in xii books [de Genesi ad literam] which he finished about 415.

cal construction he pretended to give, was the true mind of the Holy Ghost? Or could he conceive that he had any certain foundation for the mystical sense (so considered) before he had found out the literal one to ground it upon? No surely. But thinking himself at liberty to raise any true and instructive moral from the text, he gave it as a good lesson to ruminate upon, rather than as a strict interpretation of the words before him. He, and other allegorizers like him, might apprehend that dry history, or a mere narrative of facts, would be unentertaining, or unedifying to common readers or hearers, and therefore they had a mind to furnish them with proper meditations, moral and religious, to graft upon such parts of sacred writ; that so whenever they should hear or read any scripture history, such reflections also might occur to their minds, for improving the same to spiritual uses°. And whether such spiritual uses were really intended in such place by the sacred penman, or no, yet if the words might be but aptly accommodated thereto, and were but pertinently and soberly applied, and the analogy of faith preserved,

° *Eo minus vero mirandum, quod veteris ecclesiæ doctoribus hæc ipsa (allegorica) scripturarum explicandi ratio placuerit, quod et illi crederint, in scripturæ lectione unice hoc agendum, ut quæ fidem alere ac fovere, vitamque instruere possunt, inde hauriamus, reliqua non magnopere ad nos pertinere.—Prævaluit fere mystica illa et allegorica interpretandi ratio; pluribusque, ob insignem quem in vitæ fideique praxi habere videbatur usum, se commendabat. Buddei Isagog. Vol. ii. p. 1786.*

served, a good end was answered thereby, and true doctrine at least kept, if not true interpretation^p.

Nevertheless it must be owned that the allegorizing fathers did sometimes intend such comments as strict and proper interpretations; particularly, where they thought that the obvious literal meaning carried some absurdity in it, or else was too low and trivial to be the whole design of the sacred writer, or spirit of God. They had St. Paul's example to go upon: *doth God*, says he, *take care for oxen*^q? Intimating that such literal interpretation, singly considered, was too low and jejune a sense to fix upon the law, in Deuteronomy^r, and that therefore there was a necessity of supposing some higher meaning, and good reason for looking out for one. The like might be the case with other passages of the old Testament, and very probably is. And so the fathers endeavoured, wherever they apprehended any necessity of rising above the letter, to search out the mystical intendment; and in their searches of that kind they sometimes

^p Cum divinos libros legimus, in tantâ multitudine verorum intellectuum, qui de paucis verbis eruuntur, et sanitate catholice fidei muniuntur, id potissimum deligamus quod certum apparuerit eum sensisse quem legimus. Si autem hoc latet, id certe quod circumstantia scripturæ non impedit, et cum sanâ fide concordat. Si autem et scripturæ circumstantia pertractari ac discuti non potest, saltem id solum quod fides sana præscribit. Aliud est enim quid potissimum scriptor senserit non dignoscere, aliud a regulâ pietatis errare.—Si voluntas scriptoris incerta sit, sanæ fidei congruam non inutile est eruisse sententiam. Augustin. de Gen. ad Literam. L. i. C. 41. p. 132.

^q 1 Cor. ix. 9.

^r Deuteron. xxv. 4.

times indulged their fancies too far, giving their own conjectures (but modestly, and within the analogy of faith) for the sense of scripture. And what commentator is there that may not sometimes, or often, mistake in interpreting the obscure places of sacred writ? A good sense, that is to say, a sense consistent with sound doctrine, every wise man will be sure to make choice of. But as to the true sense of the place, in such instances, it is what the wisest cannot often be sure of, or take upon them to warrant.

I shall only add, that in order to form a more distinct idea of the ancient ways of interpreting, it may be proper to bear in mind that three fold method of commenting which St. Jerome lays down^a; namely, the historical, tropological, and theorical: or, in more familiar terms, the literal, moral, and sublime. The first of the three looked only to the grammatical meaning of the words, for the information of the hearers. The other two aimed
at

^a Triplex in corde nostro descriptio et regula scripturarum est. Prima, ut intelligamus eas juxta historiam: secunda, juxta tropologiam: tertia, juxta intelligentiam spiritualem.

1. In historiâ, eorum quæ scripta sunt ordo servatur:

2. In tropologiâ, de literâ ad majora confurgimus; et quidquid in priori populo carnaliter factum est, juxta moralem interpretamur locum, et ad animæ nostræ emolumenta convertimus.

3. In spiritali *θεωρίᾳ*, ad sublimiora transimus, terrena dimittimus, de futurorum beatitudine et cælestibus disputamus, ut præsentis vitæ meditatio umbra futuræ beatitudinis sit.

Hieronmy. ad Hedib. Tom. iv. p. 186. Edit. Bened.

at improving their morals, and elevating their affections. Which ends might be, in a good measure, answered by apposite meditations upon the text, though they should not happen to be true interpretations. And it was that consideration chiefly, as I conceive, which made the fathers take the more freedom in moralizing and spiritualizing (if I may so speak) the letter of sacred writ. See the last passage which I quoted from St. Austin, intimating as much.

P. 468. *Men of as great sense, learning and piety, to all outward appearance, as any in their times, have sometimes fallen into heresy.* I might mention Tertullian, Apollinaris, and several more^a. But it has been suggested by some persons, that according to the scripture account of heresy, none were chargeable with it, but men who knowingly espoused false doctrine, who were directly self condemned as teaching what they knew to be wrong, men of vile and dishonest principles, and of a flagitious character; in short monsters of lewdness or impiety. And all this is grounded upon the scattered descriptions given of several kinds of heretics, in several parts of the New Testament. I have not here room to consider this whole matter at large; nor is it necessary I should, since I have obviated the main of it in the preceding sheets. But to prevent any person's being imposed

^a Vid. Vincent. Lirinens. C. 15, 16, 23, 24.

posed upon by such suggestions, I may here throw in a few brief, and I hope, pertinent considerations.

1. All heresies mentioned in scripture were not of equal malignity. It is not right to apply to all, what was true of some only; or to draw together all the ill features of several sects, or men, into one picture of deformity, and to make it serve for the picture of every individual.

2. The apostles do not charge all the false teachers with flagitious, or openly scandalous lives, and lewd doctrines, but the nicolaitans chiefly, if not solely.

3. Some others are charged with secularity, and selfish views, but not all. The apostles, having the gift of discerning spirits, and writing by the spirit of God, might justly so charge them: otherwise many of them might have passed, and would have passed as persons of a fair character, full of godly zeal^b, and ministers of righteousness^c. It was to prevent their passing for such, that the apostles took the advantage they extraordinarily had, to expose the secret views of the men, lest they should deceive whole churches by a fair outward deportment.

4. As to those whom the apostles so charged with sinister views, or corrupt motives, it cannot be proved that they taught what they knew

^b Gal. iv. 17.

^c 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 15.

knew to be false, or believed to be wrong. But their inclinations governed their faith, and they easily believed what their passions, pride, vanity or popularity suggested to them; which is a very common case^d. So that it does not appear that those false apostles were formerly self-condemned, or any otherwise than as all false teachers and evil doers are self-condemned, when they might know and do better; though many of them enjoy great self-satisfaction.

5. Whatever the motives of such men were, the apostles did not anathematize them for their corrupt motives, but for their corrupt doctrines; which would have deserved the same anathema though taught with the best intention, and most upright views, either by the apostles themselves, or by an angel from heaven^e. St. John, in particular, does not say, whosoever upon ill motives abideth not in Christ's doctrine, or bringing not this doctrine, *receive him not*; but simply, whosoever *transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, or bringeth not this doctrine*^f: there lay all the stress.

6. Ill motives would corrupt even the best works. So, the throwing all the malignity of
heresy

^d "Men are apt to believe what they desire: and the weakest reasons which persuade them, appear like demonstrations."

See Le Clerc's whole chapter on this head, in his *Parrhasiana*, Ch. vii. p. 226. Compare Causes of Incredulity, Part i. C. 1, 2, 3.

^e Gal. i. 8.

^f 2 John 9, 10.

heresy upon the ill motives, is making no fault of the heresy at all, not specifying any difference, in moral account, between preaching the truth of the gospel, and subverting it. For to do either upon wicked motives is undoubtedly a wicked thing.

7. The design of the apostles in exposing the corrupt views of heretics, was not to justify their anathema, or censure (which was just without, because of the corrupt doctrine) but to prevent the deception of the simple, who were in danger of being beguiled by flattering professions of love and tenderness towards men, and of zeal and conscience towards God. As is plain in the case of the judaizing heretics, who were believing pharisees, and who plausibly pleaded the law of God^g. To obviate such plausible and ensnaring pretences, it was very proper to acquaint the unwary, that those false teachers were really men of selfish views and secular aims^h, and were not to be implicitly trusted upon ever so many smooth speeches, or artful professions, whether of friendliness, or godlinessⁱ.

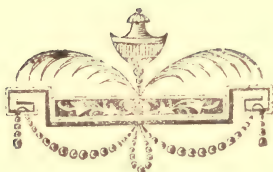
8. Lastly, let it be noted, that open declared libertines are not the most dangerous of heretics; neither are the wildest heresies, though worst in quality, the most destructive in their consequences. Some things are too gross to deceive many, and too shocking to prevail much,
or

^g Acts xv. 5.

^h Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

ⁱ Vid. Dodwell, Dissert. in Iren. iv. f. 23. p. 335.

or long. There is vastly greater danger of the christian world's running into an half religion, than there is of their taking up with none, or with one that is plainly scandalous: and infinitely more, in all likelihood, will at length perish for not being good enough, than for being monsters of lewdness, or impiety



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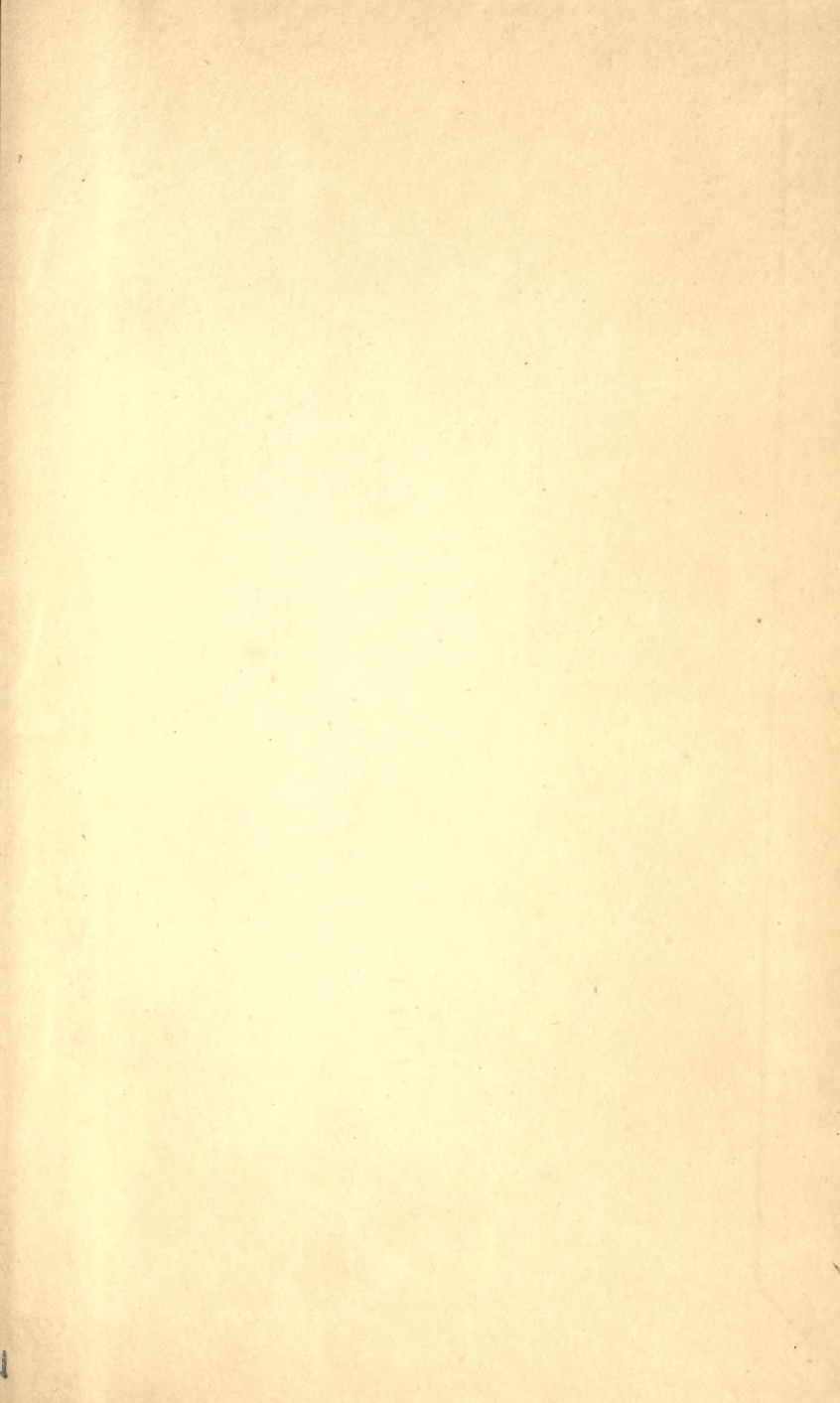
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